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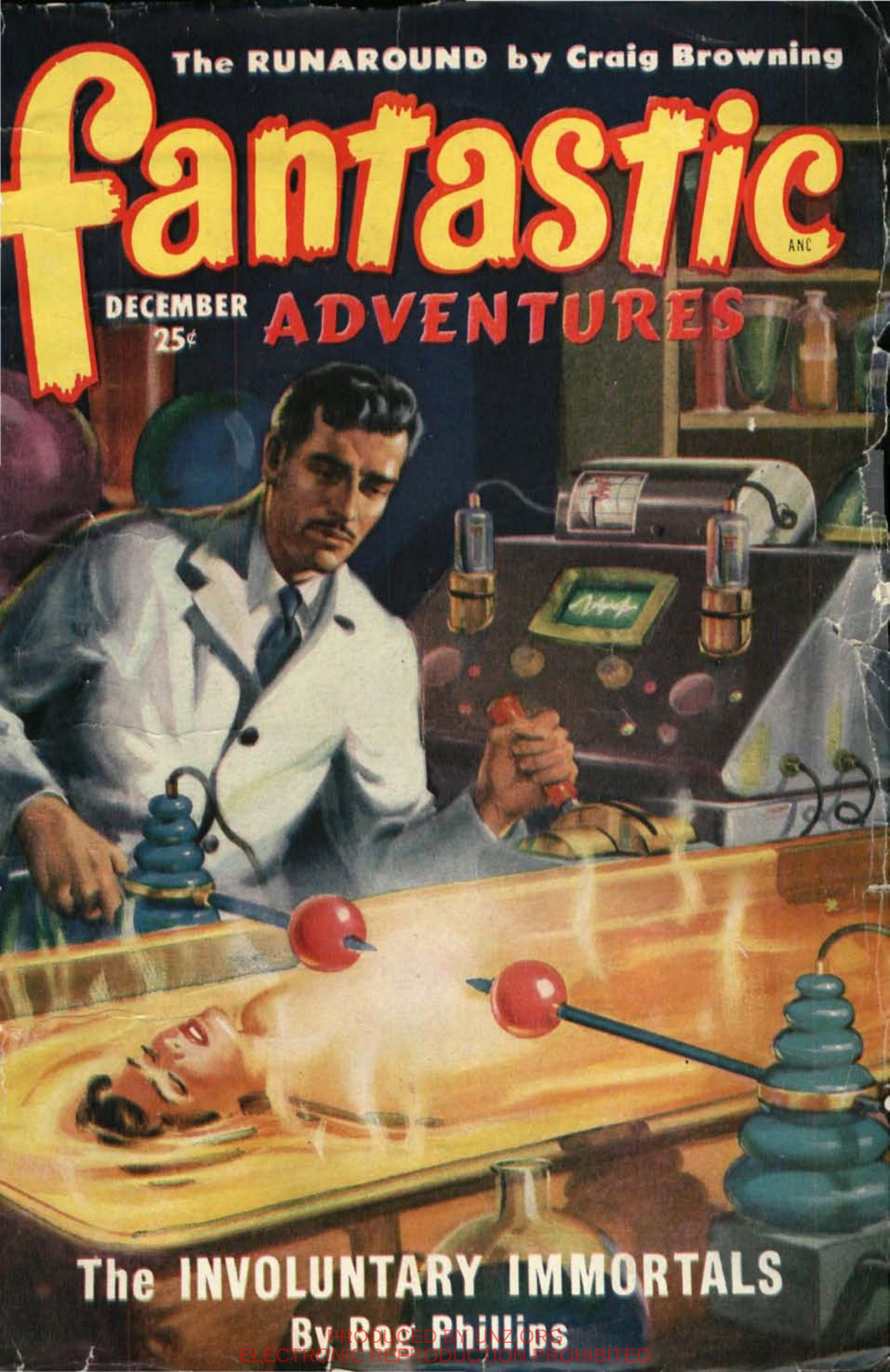

The INVOLUNTARY IMMORTALS

By Rog Phillips

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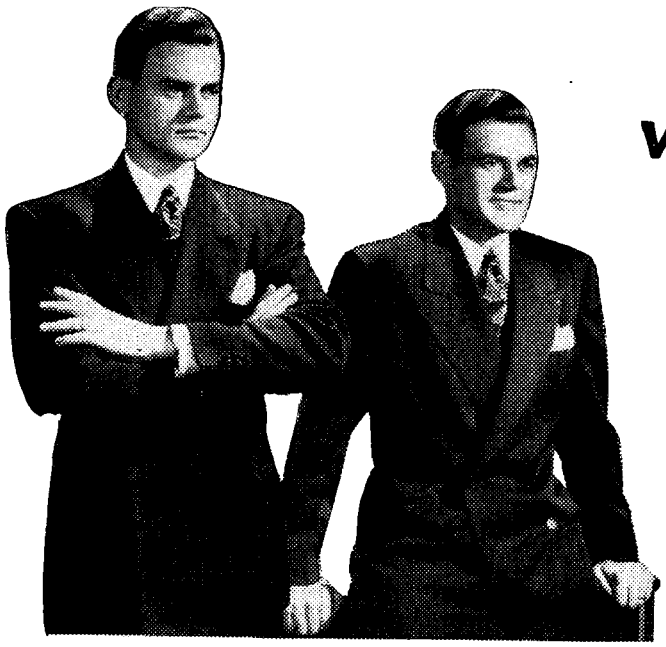

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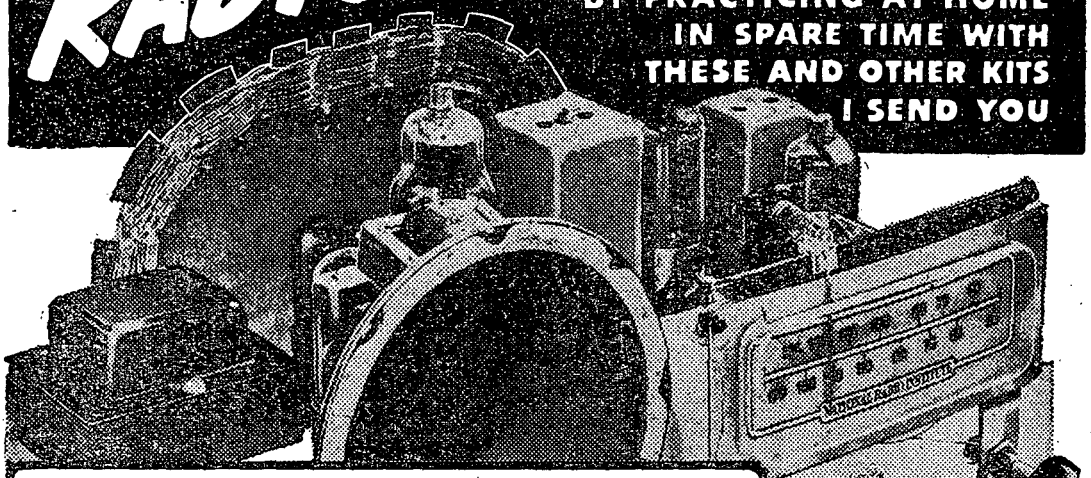

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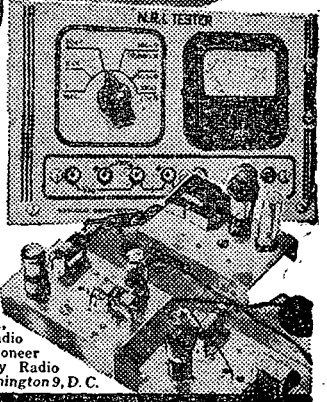

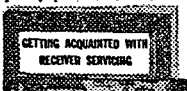

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VOLUME 11 NUMBER 12

All Stories Complete

THE INVOLUNTARY IMMORTALS (Novel 55,000) ..... by Rog Phillips 8
Illustrated by Edmond Swiatek
What had made these men and women immortal? And even more important — who? . . .

THE BOTTLE (Short — 5,000) ..... by Guy Archette 98
Illustrated by Bill Terry
Did the bottle really contain an elixir of youth? Colvin knew he had to find out . . .

THE RUNAROUND (Short — 6,000) ..... by Craig Browning 108
Illustrated by Rod Ruth
Thirty million years is a long time to travel — especially when it's a runaround!

THE COLUMN OF LIFE (Short — 9,000) ..... by Lester Barclay 120
Illustrated by Robert Keys
Hal Williams was a strange man. It seemed he used the dead — to create life! . . .

THE CYBERNETIC BRAIN (Short — 8,000) ..... by Charles Recour 138
Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa
It was an artificial leg, with an artificial brain — could it control a real body? . . .

Front cover painting by Edmond Swiatek, illustrating a scene from "The Involuntary Immortals."

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

MANY OF you will remember the great novel by Chester S. Geier, "Forever Is Too Long" that was published in our March 1947 issue. We know you remember it—because we still get letters requesting another novel along similar lines! Well, this is merely a preface to tell you that at long last we're able to present the type of story you have been waiting these many months for: a new immortality theme novel.

YOU'VE SEEN the title on this month's cover, and you've seen the swell painting that Edmond Swiatek executed around the novel. Now we'll tell you just a little about "The Involuntary Immortals" itself. Rog Phillips was greatly intrigued by the theme Geier used in his immortality tale—theorizing that immortality would be a curse instead of a benefit. Rog tells us: "I thought about it for many months before I decided to try a novel of this kind. And I didn't attempt it until I had considered every angle and arrived at the conclusion that immortality might be the greatest gift man could ever possess. I think the story speaks for itself." We haven't too much to add to that editorially. Rog has penned, what we believe—and what we think you will agree too—is one of the finest novels of its kind. The story concerns a group of people who suddenly found themselves immortal. Each of them tried to discover what had caused his own immortality, unsuccessfully. Then this group banded together, one by one, and what happened after that makes this novel an outstanding story of adventure, suspense, and solid science background. So we'll leave it up to you now. Turn to page 8 and settle down for a real treat...

GUY ARCHETTE returns this month with a unique little tale, entitled, "The Bottle". This is one of those rare gems of science-fantasy that come along once in a great while. It's a simple story, about a man who did another man a good turn, and received a reward for his efforts. But his reward was something really unusual, and we guarantee that you'll have a surprise in store for you at the end of the story. All we ask is that you refrain from reading the last page before you get to it in sequence. We think Guy did a neat job.

AS USUAL, Craig Browning comes up with a "different" type stf yarn for your reading pleasure this month. In "The Runaround" you'll take a trip with the hero, Raff Hardy, thirty million years into the future. What will the world be like at such a distant date? Probably the biggest question in your mind when you think about it will be: What about man, will he still be in existence? Well, we're not going to spoil anything for you here by telling you what Craig Browning thinks. You'll find out soon enough when you turn to page 108 and start reading!

LESTER BARCLAY presents a story that will kind of send a shiver up your back. "The Column of Life" is the story of a brilliant man who had one goal in his life—to *create* life. This man, Hal Williams, thought he had found the way to reach his goal. But strangely, the only tool seemed to be death itself! If Hal Williams had been an ordinary man what followed might never have occurred. For one by one, victims were chosen to participate in the work, victims who died mysteriously—as mysteriously as the man who seemingly was responsible for their deaths. Are we insinuating that Hal Williams died too? Frankly, we're insinuating more than that! But to tell you anything more here would be unfair. Go ahead and enjoy the story.

FINISHING u the issue is a new story by Charles Recour, entitled, "The Cybernetic Brain". This is the tale of a man who wore an artificial leg, which in turn contained an artificial brain. Everything was all right, the leg worked perfectly with its "brain"—but then suddenly the man got a strange urge... You'll find out just what happened when you read the story!

NEXT MONTH we're presenting a great new story by Geoff St. Reynard. Remember his now famous, "Blue Bottle Fly"? We predict you'll be as equally thrilled with "The Usurpers", a story of alien beings walking the earth—as men! And there'll be many more stories by your favorites, including "The Man Who Could Not Die" by ever popular Lee Francis. It's an issue to look forward to, so start haunting your newsstand. We'll be seeing you then.....WLH

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She ran frantically down the long line of vats while the two men drew steadily closer . . .

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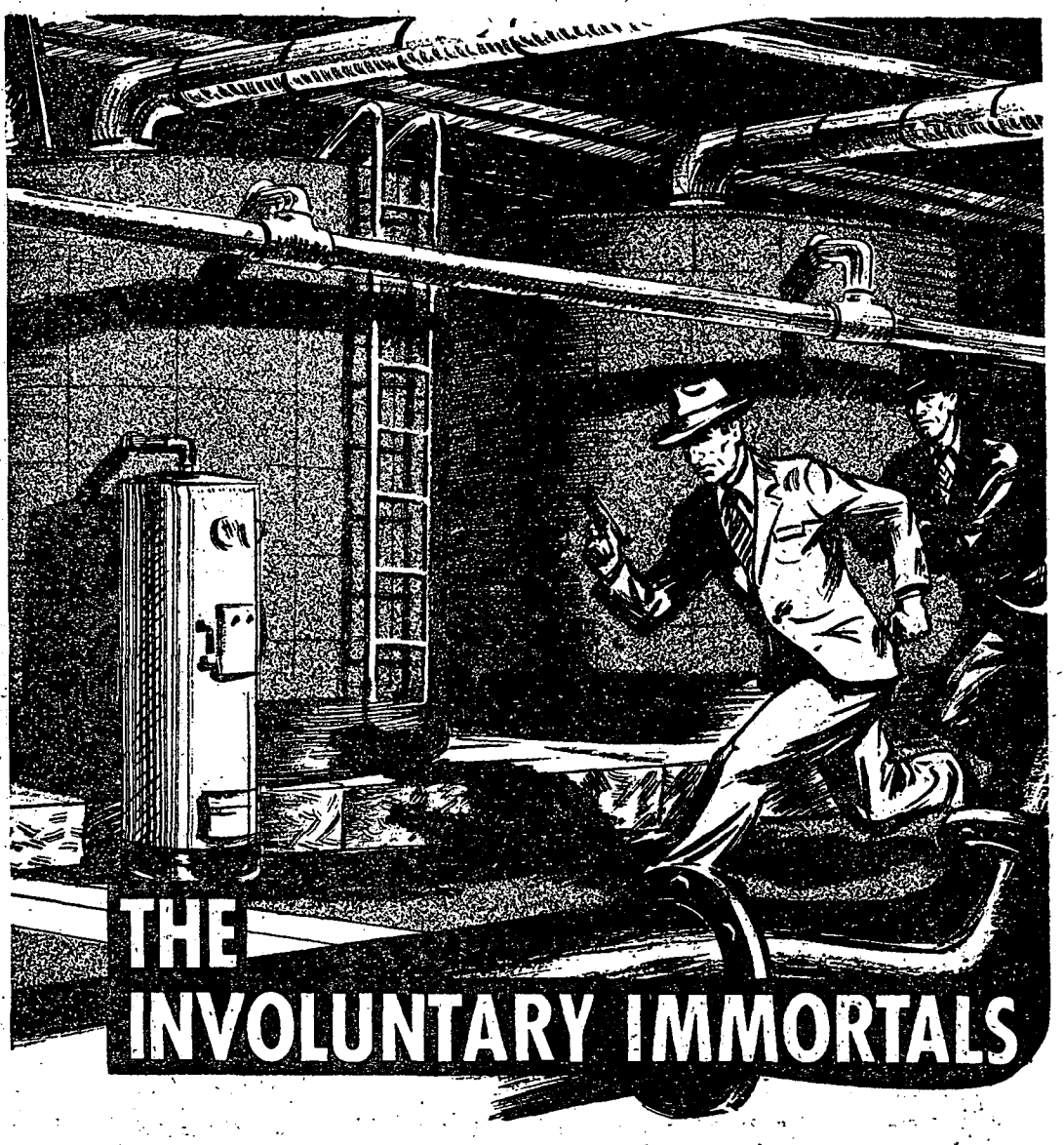

THE INVOLUNTARY IMMORTALS

By ROG PHILLIPS

Something had happened in their past lives that had made them immortal. Was it chance?—Or had it been planned that way?

CHAPTER I

"WHEN I first met him he was alive and young. Now on his deathbed he's sixty and looks a hundred, while I am still the same, the twenty I was so long, long ago."

Helen Ranston smiled sadly to herself while she sat waiting for her husband to die. Without turning her

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head she was aware of the presence of her daughter, Agnes, at her shoulder—hating, hating the mother who had borne her, who remained a vibrant, youthful twenty in every respect except years, while she was growing old at forty.

"You're still young because in some secret vampirish way you suck the life of those around you—mother." That thought, in Agnes' hate-filled voice, spoke in Helen's mind as it had spoken in actuality so many times these past few years. So much vitriol in that one word, "mother"! A word that should mean so much, and with all the meaning curdled into hate and jealousy. The jealousy of a woman growing old for a woman who never seemed to grow old at all.

Carl opened his faded eyes and looked up at Helen, loving her even now while the pains of death tore at his heart and mind. He was speaking. She bent close to hear his almost inaudible words.

"I've been a very lucky man," he was saying, his lips trembling with effort. "The bloom of youth has never left you, Helen. I pray God it never will."

"It's your love for me that has kept it so," she soothed him. "And something strange that makes me afraid."

"I know," he said. "I've often wondered about it myself. But I say now that you should not fear it whatever it may be. Nothing but good can ever come of it. Some day you will know what it is."

His strong face contorted in a spasm of pain. He dropped back on the pillow. Helen touched his forehead gently, with the palm of her hand, and knew he was gone. She bit her lip and turned away, feeling something depart from her heart that left it vacant.

"He's gone!" Agnes' shuddering whisper held disbelief. "He's GONE!" Conviction turned her voice into a shrill scream.

"It was *you*, mother," Agnes accused. "YOU killed him by drawing his life into your own body just as you are doing to mine and all those around you!"

The words, full of hatred, pelted Helen's ears like hail and echoed painfully in her now lonely heart, mocking its emptiness. There was nothing she could say to comfort her deluded daughter. Nothing she could do.

She didn't KNOW. Agnes could be right. Maybe she did drain the life from those around her in some unknown way to preserve her youth.

"Maybe I did!" It was her own despairing thoughts accusing her now. "Maybe I do!"

SHE MOVED into the outer room. As she stepped through the door, waiting relatives drew away from her. A wide-eyed youth hid behind his mother's skirt, peeking at her with an owlish stare. He was Carl's nephew, and he believed her to be a witch or vampire because she was still twenty after forty years as Carl's wife.

"If they knew how old you REALLY are!" Her thoughts were torturing her again. She had lied when she married Carl. How could she tell him she was over a hundred even then?

She had told him once and he hadn't believed her, had laughed as if it were an absurd joke. She had finally joined in with his laughter and silently resolved to keep her secret. On the marriage certificate she had placed her age as twenty. Each year she had added another year to that twenty while her body, her face, her eyes, and her spirit had remained the same.

"If I only knew why!" She had

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said this to herself so often. She didn't know why. She had never been any different than her own sisters and brothers, except that they had grown up, grown old and died long ago, while she had just grown up and stopped changing.

She didn't know why, and she would have to move on now, on into a lonely world and change her name again and say she was twenty—and look lovingly into the admiring eyes of some male whose great grandfather was in diapers when she was already mature.

It would all have to be done over again. There was nothing else in life for her except to love and marry and raise children who would all too soon look older and feel older than she.

What had the poet said? "If you can see your life work broken, and stoop and build it up again with wornout tools..."

She smiled tremulously at the nephew. Timidly he smiled back, then buried his tear-stained face in his mother's skirt. Wordlessly she continued across the room past the silent statues of mourning people and climbed the stairs that led to the second floor of what had been her home for so long.

The carpeted hall muffled her footsteps. The hoarse crying of her nephew downstairs followed her to her room. The bitter, angry sobbing of her daughter Agnes seeped through the hall faintly, depressingly, like a damp dark fog.

She began taking down pictures and removing them from their frames. Hours later she had accumulated a trunkful of trinkets, pictures, and keepsakes. She couldn't take them with her but she could store them. They were all that was left of forty wonderful years. Someday in the far distant future she would get the trunk out of storage and open it, and live over again those happy years with Carl.

But now—she dropped the lid with a bang. In her mind that action symbolized the closing of the door to the past. She could not close the door to the future, as Carl had done. Nor could she guess how long or how short that future might extend. Another century? A thousand years? A million? Would she be another legendary figure moving through time, unable to die?

She slipped the trunk key in the lock and turned it. The click of the lock brought the first sign of emotion to her smooth, beautiful face. She almost gave way to the grief she had been holding in. Almost.

In the back of the closet she unearthed three traveling cases. Opening them so they lay flat on the bed, she took her dresses from the closet and folded them in carefully. Her toilet articles followed.

BELOW, the sounds indicated that most of the relatives were departing. Sharp sounds of footsteps on the front porch, the grinding of starting motors, the snorting of motors as they caught, and the smooth purr they made as they settled down to idling speed.

Agnes would be coming up soon. Helen didn't want that. She couldn't stand much more of the accusing look in her daughter's eyes, the mad thoughts and hatred in her heart.

She was afraid of Agnes. She knew that. She had sensed thoughts in Agnes' baleful eyes. Thoughts of murder and cruelty. She didn't want to be alone with her in the same house.

Her fingers were nervous as she locked the last suitcase and slipped the keys in her handbag. She wished fervently that the halls weren't carpeted so that she could hear approaching footsteps. Agnes might

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this very minute be standing outside her door, waiting. Waiting for her to come out, or perhaps waiting for the courage to open the door and face her mother with the gun Carl always kept in his desk.

There was the window. She could climb through the window and step to the branch of the tree just outside. She could be down and away without running any risk.

The thought of slipping away from her own home in such a fashion made her smile to herself. She couldn't. She did what she had known she would do all the time, squared her pretty shoulders, held her head up bravely, and—opened the door.

The hallway was empty.

She looked down its full length, at its wide ribbon of rich carpet, its high walls so close together, to the space where the stairway led downwards. It was empty. As empty as her life.

Agnes wasn't there! The relief was overwhelming. She had SO wanted to be left alone, to suffer her grief in hallowed silence, have this last night alone with Carl. Carl!

Like a giant Sequoia falling majestically in a quiet forest; like the surface of a deep stream rippling from currents below; she bowed her head and wept. The soft sounds of her weeping drifted in the empty hall like the sad-sweet cry of the mourning dove at daybreak when all other sounds are still.

Her smoothly rounded shoulders shook under the loose white blouse she wore. Her soft hands, with their long, skilled fingers hid her face. Alone she mourned for her husband and let the salt tears of her grief dampen her cheeks and her hands.

Gradually peace came. She dried her eyes with a wisp of lace handkerchief and stole softly down the hall down the stairs, across the darkened living room to Carl's room.

For a long time she stood beside Carl's bed and looked down at him. Then she left, closing the door softly behind her.

As the door closed, one of the heavy drapes at the window stirred. A hidden hand pulled it aside. Agnes stepped out. Her face was etched with lines of suffering. Her fingers clenched and unclenched slowly.

She approached the bedside of her dead father. There she dropped to her knees and buried her head in her arms.

"Dad," she sobbed. "Dad. I solemnly swear, by all I hold sacred, I will live to make a year of her life miserable for every year of your life and mine she has stolen. I'll follow her wherever she goes. In the end I will see her dead. I'll make her pay. I swear it, dad."

Her voice dropped to a hoarse whisper

"I swear it."

CHAPTER II

"MAY I help you?" The masculine voice was strangely attractive.

Helen had not looked at her seat companion yet. She paused in the act of lifting her light overnight bag into the rack above the seats to look down at him.

He was rising hastily. His general appearance told her he was young,—no more than twenty-five. His smile caused her thoughts to whisper, "Nice."

She was angry at that thought, coming so soon after Carl's death.

"No thank you," she replied curtly.

Immediately she felt ashamed. To cover up, she resumed her efforts to lift the bag into the rack. Just as she was on the point of confessing

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failure and asking the young man's assistance she felt his hand take the handle from her with firm insistence and saw the bag raised the extra half inch necessary to slide it on the rack.

A contrite smile on her face, she turned to thank him. He had already resumed his seat, his face turned toward the window. She sat down feeling ashamed.

Her eyes analyzed the profile of this man who had managed to put her in her place so effectively. His nose was a trifle large. His chin and jaw had a smooth line, which, coupled with something about his cheekbone, gave the impression of westernness. His loosely combed hair accentuated this with its soft brown color.

Only the tailoring of the blue pinstripe suit he wore indicated that he was a city product. He carried it too naturally, and it fitted him too well.

His head began to turn toward her. She hastily buried her eyes in her vanity case, pretending to search for something. She could feel his gaze as he looked at her.

She hadn't felt so flustered in a century. The near truth of that brought back the realization that she was old. Too old to be flustered by the glance of a young man.

She closed her purse and looked up. His head was turned toward the window again.

His hands lay loosely in his lap. They were well-formed with long, straight fingers. Even in repose they seemed alive and intelligent,—those of a musician or some other craft that required trained hands. They were like hers except that they were wider and the fingers larger around.

A small gold pin on his lapel caught her eye. It had a design that was unfamiliar to her.

Outside, the station started to recede as the train moved.

The pin had an emblem on it. It was a small leaf of some sort, shaped like a Maple leaf. A drawn out figure eight laying on its side passed through the center of the leaf. It looked something like the infinity sign in algebra with the left hand half partly hidden by the leaf.

A sudden suspicion made her look up. The young man's eyes were looking at her. She smiled guiltily.

"I must apologize for being curt with you," she said.

"Quite all right," he answered. "Your home town?" He moved his head backward in the direction from which they had come.

"Yes." Carl rose before her eyes. Carl as he had been when they were first married. This young man was like him in some ways. The same age, but a little more mature. A little more—grown up.

"I'm Harvey Trent," he was saying. She jerked her thoughts back to the present.

"Glad to know you, Harvey Trent," she said. "My name is Helen, Helen Hanover."

SHE WONDERED why she had chosen that name. Hanover was her maiden name, the name she had been born under. She had never even told Carl that name, yet she was using it now.

She glanced down at the lapel pin again. Harvey raised his hand and rubbed the pin with his fingers.

"A sort of a lodge pin," he explained. "A very exclusive lodge."

"In what way?" Helen asked. "You don't look like the sort of person to join exclusive organizations."

"I'm not, really," Harvey answered. "And its members aren't snooty or anything like that. As a matter of fact it's the most democratic group in the world. Only, you almost have to be born into it."

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"Oh," Helen remarked. "Are there any women in it?"

"A few, I suppose," Harvey said in a tone of dismissing the subject. "Are you going to Chicago for a visit?"

"No," Helen replied, smiling to herself at the adroit way he had changed the subject. "To live there. Perhaps just to visit and then go on to some other place. My—father just died and there isn't anything to hold me in Dubuque any more."

"I see," Harvey said. "Sorry to hear it."

"That pin," Helen said. "What does the symbol mean? It must mean something."

"Lodge secret," Harvey winked slyly. "We have to solemnly swear never to tell."

Helen found herself laughing gayly, feeling as young as she looked. She wanted to know more about this young man named Harvey Trent. He was enough older than she looked for her to recapture the feeling of being young.

"Do you live in Chicago, Mr. Trent?" she asked.

"In a way you might say I do," was the reply. "With me all roads lead to Chicago; so you might call it home, though I average less than two months a year there. The rest of the time I'm following my work."

"What is your work?" Helen asked.

"Something you've never heard of, I'll bet," Harvey answered. "I just travel around, eating in cafes, living in hotels, going to churches, libraries, parks, and wherever my nose leads me. I'm national pulse feeler for a concern that thinks it's worth money to have an expert constantly feeling the national pulse."

"Sort of a Gallup poll on the hoof," Helen joked.

"Right." Harvey grinned. "They have an advantage over the mail order type. There you just find out the opinions of a cross section of the public. With the galloping poll we can be Paul Reveres when the occasion warrants it, and sort of shape public opinion in certain directions."

"Then you aren't the only one doing this?" Helen asked.

"Oh no," Harvey said. "Right now there are thirty of us."

"Do they—" Helen hesitated. "Do they all wear that button you are wearing?"

"Why do you keep coming back to that?" Harvey asked, looking at her queerly. "Are you just curious?"

"Not exactly curious," Helen answered slowly. "But let's skip it. What I'm thinking would be too utterly fantastic to be true. If you'll excuse me—?"

She rose and walked down the aisle to the powder lounge. She had to escape and have time to think. That algebra symbol meant infinity—or eternity, if you applied it to time; and the leaf symbolized life! The two together, the sign of eternity piercing the symbol of life—could there be others like her?

But of course not! And if she were foolish as to give away her secret, this young man, Harvey Trent, would either think it a big joke as Carl had done, or he would think her insane.

HELEN looked at herself in the mirror. Reasoned with herself. Her powder puff shook in her hand. And for the first time in her life she felt apart from other people.

She was suffering the hopes of a sparrow in a land of robins who for a moment thinks she sees one of her own kind. It had never occurred to her that there might be others like her.

She looked into the eyes of her reflection in the mirror and was amazed that in her century and a half

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of knowing she was different she had never once thought of others, somewhere, being the same.

That possibility, thrust at her so forcibly as an almost actuality, had had the force of a physical blow. The practical side of her nature told her that it was most likely not true that there were others, leaving her with a deeper loneliness than she had ever felt before.

It was torturing. She had gone out into the world in search of someone to be happy with and enjoy for a time this life of hers that stretched into an endless future. That was all she had hoped for, all she had dreamed of finding.

Now, for the first time in her life, it had dawned on her that there might be others like her, and as she appraised herself in the mirror she knew that never again could she go through what she had gone through with Carl. Seeing another man she loved grow old, and die, watching another child she bore grow up, and then grow older than its mother—it would be too much to take over again.

She could remember when her daughter Agnes had begun to change toward her. At first Agnes had been proud when someone remarked, "Why Agnes! you are as grownup as your mother already!"

Agnes had been twenty then. The two of them had looked more like sisters than mother and daughter.

Carl, always the lover, had taken them together when his business permitted an evening of relaxation. They had worn the same clothes. They had laughed at the confusion of young men when Agnes introduced her mother. It had been heavenly—for a year or two.

Inevitably someone had remarked that Agnes was beginning to look a little older than her mother. Occasionally Helen had discovered Agnes looking at her strangely analytically.

She had sensed the bewilderment in Agnes' mind. She had watched it change to something else that was an everchanging mixture of jealousy, fear, suspicion, and finally hate.

She had watched the progress of the mental cancer, unable to do anything about it. The carefree parties had ended. Agnes had taken to avoiding her mother as much as possible.

Eventually she had married. Helen never saw Agnes' husband. Carl had met him. Helen understood and sympathized with Agnes on that. She understood all too clearly that Agnes, a beautiful woman of twenty-eight when she married, could not introduce her husband to a vibrant young lady who seemed no more than twenty and say, "This is my mother."

It might have been all right after that, but Agnes kept torturing herself by coming home. Each time she came she looked at her mother closely, looking for some sign of age, some line or wrinkle that hadn't been there before.

Then her husband had left her. For a year Agnes stayed away from home. Carl, gentle loving Carl who understood so little about women, insisted she come back home to live.

That had been seven years before; and during those seven years Agnes had remained at home, tortured by irrational fears of her ever youthful mother, fears that were all the more horrible because they MIGHT be true.

HELEN snapped back to the present and found that she had been sitting for some time, her powder puff resting against her cheek, her eyes far away. Putting it back in the compact with a tired sigh she took one more look to make sure she

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was presentable and returned to her seat in the coach.

Harvey looked up from a magazine with a bright smile as she dropped beside him.

"Another hour," he said softly.

"Yes, another hour," Helen echoed, her voice sounding queer to her. She looked past him, out the window at the moving scenery.

He looked at the bitter lines on her lips, opened his mouth as if to speak, then shrugged his shoulders and returned to his magazine.

A few minutes later, without looking up, he spoke.

"Don't you think it might help if you told me about it?" he asked softly.

He didn't look up. Helen appreciated that. If he had he would have seen the motions expressed on her face. The hopelessness, loneliness, bitterness, sadness.

"There's nothing I could tell," she said, her voice muffled. "Nothing. Nothing that would make any sense to you."

"This is certainly a strange story I'm reading," Harvey's voice changed to polite conversation. "Quite unusual. It makes for emotional drama, in a way, but is so impossible. It's the story of a man who never grows old. He always stays about twenty-five while his beautiful wife grows older and older until people are mistaking him for her son."

Helen glanced at him sharply. His eyes were still turned away, resting on the pages of the magazine. She followed them. The title of the story was at the top of the page. It was THE STOCTON MURDERS.

Now she was trembling again, so violently that she had to grip her hands together until the knuckles were white and bloodless.

Harvey was looking at her hands. His face was expressionless.

"Perhaps I could tell YOU the meaning of the emblem on your button," Helen said breathlessly. She bit her lip. There was no turning back now. She would make a fool of herself, a complete fool. When the train stopped at the depot in Chicago she would run and run, until she had escaped from this—escaped into the comfortable world she was looking for. But first she had to make a fool of herself. She had to, or spend eternity wondering.

Harvey didn't answer. His eyes watched her tense hands.

For some reason Helen couldn't speak. She wanted to cry. She wanted to laugh hysterically. She wanted to get up and run down the aisle, through car after car.

Her hands were fumbling with the clasp of her purse.

Harvey laid a strong, warm hand over hers, squeezed them together until they hurt. For the first time he looked directly into her eyes.

She let him look. She could feel him probe, feel the pity and gentleness of his soul. And a growing wonder possessed her.

These were not the eyes of a twenty-five year old child. They were the eyes of a man. They were the eyes of one who had seen—the things SHE had seen.

"You know?" she asked faintly. The trembling was coming again while she waited for him to speak.

"You never thought there would be others!" Harvey's eyes widened in surprise. "You thought you were all alone!"

"Did I?" She laughed giddily at her silly question. The last bit of uncertainty left her mind. Harvey was as old as she herself. There was a club of people all as old as she was. There were dozens of them. Hundreds. Thousands!

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She pulled her hands from under his.

"I'm all right now, Harvey," she said, settling back. "I feel like I had just been born."

Gloom and noise exploded outside the window, accompanied by the feeling of braking. The train was coming into the station.

"Have your bags ready please." It was the conductor's practical voice as he passed through the car. Harvey got the bags down from the rack.

"Have your bags ready please. Have your bags ready please." Station sounds, steam engines steaming in lazy motionlessness on other tracks. Baggage trucks being pulled noisily in long strings by small trucks. People scurrying on the concrete outside the window, and people moving down the aisle inside.

And Harvey moving beside her, protectingly, as they edged their way along between the seats. Chicago!

CHAPTER III

"SHE PICKED up with some guy on the train."

The speaker, a man in his early forties, held the phone against his ear with a hunched shoulder while he carefully rolled a cigaret.

"That's what I said," he went on in a sad voice. "They got off together. I tailed them to the Palmer House where she rented a room. No, he didn't register. He lives someplace, I guess.

"Yeah. I managed to see what name she signed. It's Helen Hanover. The guy's name is Harvey Trent. Nice looking fellow."

The speaker grinned, creasing the side of his face with two deep wrinkles. It gave him a hawkish appearance. His eyes, even in good natured repose, were cold, unemotional.

"Yea, sure, Agnes," he said after listening a full minute. "Yea. I'll do that. You want to stay in the background. I understand. How much did you say you were getting from your father's estate?"

He blinked his eyes and whistled softly.

"O.K., Agnes," he said. "I'm your faithful servant. I'd suggest you go to the bank and borrow a few thousand until the estate is settled though. It may be a couple months, and I only run on cash, not promises.

"O.K., I'll mail you a report every day. Unless something comes up I'll meet you at the station next week. Meanwhile see about getting more money. I don't want to run short. O.K. G'by."

He pulled the phone booth door open and stepped out. There was a look of satisfaction on his thin face. His price of twenty-five a day and expenses was based on getting only short time detective jobs. This one seemed likely to run into some dough. The expenses—Charlie Hains was already cooking up angles to pad the account. He hoped Helen wouldn't go any place expensive. Then he could report that she had and add maybe twenty or thirty dollars a day onto his bill.

He stopped at the cigar counter in the lobby and indulged in a fifty cent cigar, casting his eyes possessively over the expanse of quiet richness around him.

"I don't know what the score is," he said to himself. "But as long as it adds up to at least twenty-five bucks a day and life in places like this..." He beamed at the girl behind the counter and walked over to the desk to register.

He turned in time to see Harvey and Helen crossing the lobby from the elevator to the street doors.

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"Have a boy take my bags to my room," he said hastily. He reached the sidewalk in time to see Harvey slam the door of the taxi. Another taxi was waiting.

He climbed in, flashed his badge, and ordered the driver to follow the taxi ahead.

"Sorry bub," the driver said. "That's an out of town badge. No can do."

Charlie sighed and let go of a ten dollar bill. The driver hesitated, then took it.

His sigh changed to an audible groan when the taxi ahead stopped after going three blocks and let Harvey and Helen out at the marquee of a restaurant.

"Thanks, sucker," the cabby said dryly as Charlie stepped out.

"You're taking part of my heart with you, dear," Charlie replied.

"No doubt," the driver said, easing away into the traffic.

"THERE are over seven hundred of us so far," Harvey was saying as Charlie seated himself at the table a few feet away. "There must be many others, like you, who never suspected, thought they were alone. We hope someday to have them all together. Then maybe we can find the cause. There MUST be something that happened to all of us to produce it. It's too much to believe that through some quirk of evolution a few hundred or thousand people suddenly became immortal. We are all old enough now to rule out simple longevity."

"But how can you find it just by getting us all together?" Helen asked.

"It might not take all of us to do it," Harvey explained. "What we have to do is keep on comparing our lives from the very start. In that way we'll find the common denominators, the experiences that we have in common. Among them will lie the single incident that began it all."

"What could it possibly be?" Helen asked.

"Who knows?" Harvey said. "Were we all in the same section of the country at some time? That's been ruled out already. What is the time factor? We've narrowed that down considerably. Whatever happened, it took place in eighteen forty-eight. We feel sure of that. There's one man who was quite old at the time. He began growing younger. There was a forty-five year old woman with cancer. In that year it unaccountably began to shrivel up. The youngest of us was a seven year old boy in eighteen forty-eight, and the oldest was that man, seventy-three years of age."

"I was born in eighteen thirty-one," Helen said quietly. It felt strange to say it. A few hours ago she had almost forgotten it entirely. It was the past she had kept hidden.

"I'm nine years older than you are, thank God," Harvey remarked.

The waiter came with their food and they started talking about other things.

Charlie Hains, on the other side of the post, had heard every word. There was a dazed look in his eyes.

"They MUST be crazy," he tried to assure himself. "They MUST be!" The sick realization remained that they were not. But if they weren't crazy, maybe it was some sort of a joke he didn't see the point to. It COULDN'T be that—that... His mind refused to formulate the statement.

The waiter was standing over him patiently. He ordered half-heartedly,

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feeling that he wouldn't be able to eat. How could he eat, he asked himself, when there were two people so close to him that should be dead.

His meal came and he found he was hungry after all. He kept his ears cocked on the casual conversation around the post. After a few bites his mind began to churn with thoughts. When he took the job of following Helen on the train he had thought it was another divorce buildup. When Harvey entered the picture he felt sure of it.

Even when Agnes had talked as if his job might last for as long as a year he had still thought it a routine job of gathering evidence of infidelity. But now...

He gave a short laugh. All his life he had wanted to latch onto something big. His ideas of big had never gone farther than blackmail. He had become a detective with that in mind.

With Agnes providing the money, and something like the secret of immortality within reach, it was a different story.

SUDDENLY he began to tremble. He was afraid. For the first time in his life he was afraid. It wasn't a fear of physical danger. It was a fear born of the conviction that there were people alive who were going to live forever, and that if he failed he might die. He was over forty and seventy would come so quickly. People being born would just have time to become men and women before he tottered into his grave.

A feeling of resentment grew in him against Helen and Harvey, talking so casually about visiting the zoo and the museum tomorrow, so smug and secure in their deathlessness. He could understand Agnes' feelings toward Helen now. Agnes didn't know about Harvey; but she evidently knew all about Helen.

"I have a daughter," Helen's voice caused Charlie to prick up his ears again. "Her name is Agnes. She's forty now and has grown to hate me with a consuming hatred."

A satisfied gleam came into Charlie's close set eyes. So that was the setup! He relaxed and pulled out another fifty cent cigar. He had nothing to worry about. With what he could tell Agnes now he could be sure of a continual and inexhaustible source of money. Maybe he might even go for Agnes when he saw her again. He had only seen her the once, the day before, when she had called and then come to his office and given him the picture of Helen, two hundred dollars, and instructions to catch the noon train and follow Helen. Then she had been merely a slightly excited client with some cash in her hand—too rich for him to get careless with. He frowned and wished he had taken a better look at her.

Helen and Harvey were getting up. Charlie made no move to follow. From their conversation he knew that Helen was going straight to the hotel, and that Harvey would meet her in the morning at ten thirty.

He watched them weave through the tables toward the front and blew some cigar smoke after them in farewell.

"G'by, grandma," he said softly. "Me, I've got to get some boys together. Good thing I have references from the right places."

HARVEY settled in the cab beside Helen with a disarming smile on his lips.

"I hope you don't mind, Helen," he said. "But I ordered the cab to drive us to a friend of mine. I was going to tell you about it inside but decided not to. There was a man sitting behind the post at your back in the res-

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taurant. I'd noticed him in the lobby at the hotel. Of course, it might just have been coincidence, and he couldn't possibly have heard enough of our conversation to know what we were talking about unless he had unusually keen hearing. Just the same I felt alarmed about him."

"That's quite all right, Harvey," Helen said.

He reached over and took her hand.

"I guess I was alarmed over nothing though," he went on. "When we reached the front I looked back and the man was still sitting at his table, smoking a cigar as if he didn't intend to leave for half an hour yet."

"Even if he knew our secret what good would it do him to follow us?" Helen asked.

"I don't know," Harvey shrugged. "If he's after the secret of immortality, so are we. And if he knows our secret *it won't do him any good to* tell it to the world. The world would just laugh at him."

The taxi slid smoothly to a stop in front of a brownstone mansion.

Harvey pressed a bell under a metal plate with the name, George Granville, engraved on it. There was a two minute wait before the loud buzzing indicated the inner door had unlocked.

Harvey held the door open for Helen to pass. The gloomy stairs led upward steeply, twisting until they ended at the third floor.

George Granville was standing in the open doorway waiting for them. His eyebrows lifted in curiosity as he saw Helen.

"Helen Hanover, may I present George Granville," Harvey said. "George, she is a new recruit."

George was a full head taller than Harvey, blond, the classical picture of a Viking. He shook hands solemnly with Helen.

"Welcome into our circle," he said. "I hope you plan on being with us a long time."

He backed into the room and stood to one side so that Helen and Harvey could enter, and closed the door carefully while they began taking off their coats.

"So you're one of the immortals," he said. "I must say you carry your age well. Even so, I would say you are about—a hundred and forty one?"

"Three," Helen smiled.

"You don't look it," George said solemnly. "May I ask how you found Harvey?"

"I didn't," Helen said with a twinkle in her eye. "He was my seat companion on the train. I saw his lapel pin and put the symbol for life and the symbol for infinity together and got four."

"That's why we adopted that lapel emblem," George said. "To the common man it might be interpreted that way also, but to him it would have no special significance. To you it did."

"Yes," Helen said. "Until I saw it I had never dreamed there might be others who were as old as I."

"That's part of Harvey's job," George explained. "He is a pulse feeler, but along with that he, and several others, just circulate so that people can see that emblem and wonder about it, and if they are into their second century of life they will get the right meaning."

"George is a sort of personnel chief," Harvey explained. "His job is to interview the newly found persons and find out how they have been living and help them adjust themselves to the rest of us. You'd be surprised how many of us hadn't done much in the way of planning our future before we came here."

"I'm afraid I haven't done that either," Helen said ruefully. "When you met me, Harvey, I was on my

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way to creating a new identity and a new life, with marriage, children, and the same ending as the other time, with me still young while those around me grew old."

"How many times have you done that?" George asked.

HELEN didn't reply for a long time. Finally she said faintly, "Three times."

"We won't require you to go any further into that," George said hastily. "The joys, the love, and the heartbreaks of the past are your own personal property and are classed by us as your apprenticeship in life. We facetiously call them the initiation into the ancient and honorable order of ancients and honorables. You're now the ancient and honorable Helen Hanover, if that is your original maiden name. Is it?"

"Yes," Helen said, turning her eyes to Harvey. "For some reason I gave you my real name right at the start. I didn't mean to, but it came out."

"Yes," George said dryly. "I can see that you two are that way about each other. It reminds me of a joke. Oh, well, I'll skip the joke. How about a little refreshment? Would you like some tea and sandwiches?"

"The tea would be nice," Helen replied. "But we just had an enormous dinner."

She liked the jovial giant. His living room was filled with luxurious antiques. It was a room such as one she had seen in her childhood, and which was called modern then. She wondered briefly what the rest of the apartment contained. George seemed to sense her thoughts.

"One thing you must learn now," he said, preparing the pot of tea on an all purpose bar of rich walnut, "is to be self-sufficient and continually pursuing intellectual subjects. One way to get into it is to see how the rest of us do it. Later I'll show you through my apartment and you can see my library, laboratory, and workshop. Unfortunately I am more interested in culture than science. Some of us, however, spend most of our time being scientific. It's really necessary for them to be that way. They have a definite job, to find out what made us immortal so that we may give everyone the same blessing."

"Oh, but I'm afraid that to some people it might be a curse, mightn't it?" Helen asked.

George and Harvey looked knowingly at each other.

"Definitely not," Harvey took up the conversation. "We've proven that after a hundred years or so of life even the most hardened criminals get tired of it and settle down. Especially do they get over their bad traits when their physical health remains perfect year after year."

George poured the steaming tea.

"Of course," he said quietly, sitting down, "we can't know how many of the immortals found life increasingly intolerable and committed suicide. We can't know how many become insane and were placed in asylums where doctors eventually gave them mercy death to end the expense of keeping a patient who seemed destined to live forever. Those were automatically eliminated, and all of us we can find are those who found life at least tolerable. Among those we have one man who started out in life as a murderer. By the year eighteen-fifty he had killed ten people and amassed quite a fortune in business. But, as he confesses, from eighteen forty-eight on, his heart wasn't exactly in it. He finally gave it up. Sanity took two years to make a complete conquest of his mind. There is a woman who started out as a halfwit. In eighteen forty-eight she was twenty-seven

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years old and had the mind of a child. Her parents died and she was placed in an institution. She escaped and lived as a wanton for almost fifty years. During that half century she travelled, finally learned to read and write, and is today a professional author who has gained fame under three different names successively. It took her a century to arrive at intelligence and sanity and capability.

"So you see, Helen, eternal life is the great leveler. It leads us all to the same goal."

"But you couldn't just make everyone on Earth immortal if the way is found," Helen objected. "What of the dictators and those whose driving urge is power? Immortality would enable them to achieve their ambitions."

"For a time, perhaps," George said. "Eventually they would grow tired of power, and of people stupidly debasing themselves to the idol of one man's self esteem. Their sense of values would change just as it did with the murderer for money."

"You may be right," Helen said slowly. "You see, I haven't thought of these things before. It's too big for me to grasp it all on the first day I learn about it."

"You mean that yesterday—?" George exclaimed.

"Yesterday," Helen said. "I attended the funeral of my husband, Carl, who died of old age. I was surrounded by his relatives who believe me to be some sort of a witch. My daughter, Agnes, who hates me with all the hate one woman can have for another, stood in back of me, wishing with all her heart that she could push me into the grave and fill it over with dirt."

"But that was yesterday," Harvey said softly, reaching over and putting his arm around her affectionately.

"Ahem. Suppose we look at the rest of my domicile," George said hastily.

CHAPTER IV

CHARLIE HAINS hopped lightly to the safety island from the steps of the surface car and walked rapidly to the sidewalk. Half way down the block was a modest neon sign announcing the "CLUB rouell". A block further on, and on the other side of the street, was a similar sign announcing the "LOUNGE rouell."

Charlie did not think this strange. He liked the rouell drinks himself. In 1964 after the end of World War III, alcoholic drinks had become practically nonexistent. Grain shortages all over the world were the cause of that.

Providentially, (or perhaps not so providentially, depending on the point of view) some obscure chemist had discovered a drug which, in very minute quantities, had all the effects of alcohol. Carbonated water, artificial flavorings, and less than a pinch of this drug produced a beer indistinguishable from the finest of natural brews.

This drug had a name that only a trained chemist could pronounce in full. In some way the name, "rouell" had been tagged to it and stuck in the public mind. The ersatz beer made a fortune overnight for the chemist. Within a year he had concocted other drinks with a rouell base instead of an alcoholic base. They sold for prices comparing with those of the alcohol drinks, and with alcohol unobtainable, had no competition.

It wasn't until the harvest of 1966 which passed all records and grains

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were again available for producing alcoholic beverages, t at it was discovered that a person who had been drinking rouell for several months developed an intolerance for alcohol, so that even one glass of beer with alcohol in it made that person violently ill.

There was a mild flurry of excitement and worry over this. A move was even under way to prohibit the sale of rouell when tests proved that this intolerance for alcohol of the rouell addict wore off completely if both alcohol and rouell were left strictly alone for six weeks. It had already been proven that rouell had no harmful effect on the body. Scientific assurance, that anyone who had the will power to leave drinking alone for six weeks could switch back to alcohol, pulled the fangs on the anti-rouell movement.

It also took the profit out of the alcoholic beverage industry. Rouell champagne, superior to the real thing, could be turned out at the rate of thousands of gallons a day for a few cents a gallon. Ersatz whiskeys identical in every way with the real stuff except in specific gravity could actually be sold for twenty-five cents a fifth in a price war.

The distillers, not suspecting the allergy to alcohol built up by rouell, had not prepared for competition by forcing through special taxes such as those that had existed once on imitation butters. The government, not dreaming that the grain shortage would last so long, had neglected to put any tax on the rouell products.

And who wanted to lay off liquor for six weeks anyway? Rouell stayed and elaborate distilleries went bankrupt.

Charlie entered the CLUB rouell casually and went up to the bar. The place was dimly lit.

He ordered a beer from the bartender and took his time surveying the place while he drank it. A piano player was lazily making some cultured noise. Charlie listened and couldn't detect an identifiable tune to the music.

Mildly intoxicated people danced on the small square reserved for that. Others sat sophisticatedly and watched the television screen which at the moment was showing a newsreel in technicolor.

DARK CURTAINS hung over a wide entryway in the rear. Over this space a sign on the wall announced rest rooms. Charlie finished his beer and moved toward the curtains. Other people were doing the same. Still others were parting the curtains and coming out.

On the other side of the curtains was a wide hall. At the end of this hall double doors were just closing. Charlie pushed one of them open and walked through. He was in a large room with dice tables and card tables occupying most of the floor space.

He ignored these and continued walking until he came to a door that had "OFFICE" painted in gold letters on it. He rapped politely on the door and waited.

A man Charlie had seen fighting in the ring a few years before tapped him lightly on the shoulder and told him if he had any complaints to tell him about it.

"No complaints," Charlie smiled. "I want to see Phil Cooger. Blacky Arbuster told me to see him."

"Blacky?" the bouncer said with respect. "You a friend of his? It's O.K. then." He gave two short raps, waited, then rapped once more. A loud click sounded. The door opened.

Phil Cooger was a man who had

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risen to power in Chicago almost overnight, ten years before. He was short, five feet six and three-quarters inches. His shoulders were broad and powerful. His once jet black hair was streaked with grey. His face, aside from a trace of age under the eyes, was youthful appearing and strong.

He was encased in a citadel of rumor built up by word of mouth and by repeated newspaper crusades against him. He held the rouell industry in Chicago in his clenched fist. Those who tried to muscle in either dropped out of sight or settled down to become owners of clubs or bars or lounges with Mr. Cooger getting most of the profits.

The newspapers claimed that no one committed a crime within a hundred mile radius of Chicago without first receiving permission from Phil Cooger. They also claimed that the police couldn't make an arrest without an O.K. from Phil Cooger.

The CLUB rouell was his headquarters. His office was the most unpretentious one Charlie Hains had ever seen. In contrast to the luxury of the gambling room and the air of richness of the dance floor and barroom, there was a bare wooden floor, a cheap desk, several wooden chairs, and five phones.

The phones were silent when Charlie entered. They were no different than other phones except that each had a different number and each number was unlisted.

Phil himself sat at his desk, his hand still curved over the edge where the push button that opened the door was located.

"This guy says that Blacky Arbuster sent him to see you, Mr. Cooger," the bouncer said respectfully.

Phil Cooger glanced swiftly over Charlie's features, nodded imperceptibly, and sat back in his chair.

Charlie showed his badge and credentials. Phil Cooger took them and examined them with seeming carefulness.

"Seem all right," he finally said. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm on a job," Charlie explained. He shrugged his shoulders and added. "Nothing much. Just to follow a woman and a man and try to get evidence against them for a divorce. I need a couple of good boys to spell me off on it—the kind that do what they're told and don't get too nosey."

"What's the names of this man and women?" Phil asked.

"I suppose you'd find out anyway from your boys, so there's no harm in telling you," Charlie said. "The woman is going by the name of Helen Hanover. The man she's running around with is named Harvey Trent."

"Tell me more," Phil said.

"Hanover is a fake name. I can't tell you her real name. Lives in Dubuque. Caught the train this noon. Picked up with this guy Trent or he was on the train by prearrangement, I don't know which. They went to the Palmer House where she registered. After that they went to a night spot. I figured they wouldn't do much this evening, and decided to get a couple of boys to help me on this."

"I guess I can help you out," Phil Cooger said carefully. "What's your address here in town? I'll have the boys over there in a couple of hours."

"Fine!" Charlie said, relieved. "I'm at the Palmer House too. Don't remember the room number. Just had time to register before I had to follow them to the night spot."

"In case they aren't satisfactory or you want more help," Phil said, rising, "Call BEN 5550 and register it

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on the recording. I'll get it. Want to do a little gambling while you're here?"

"Not tonight, Phil," Charlie said expansively.

"Mr. Cooger," Phil Cooger said frigidly. "And don't ever forget it." His eyes were ice as they lashed at Charlie.

"Sure, Mr. Cooger," he stammered. "Sure. Sorry I forgot my place."

"O. K.," Phil Cooger said, shutting off the ice and smiling warmly.

Charlie left his office feeling that he had been far from being in command of the situation.

AS THE DOOR closed on Charlie Hains, Phil Cooger walked across the room and bent over, holding a signet ring on his finger an eighth of an inch from a small dirt spot on the wall close to the base board. Behind him a section of the floor started to rise. Rising with it was a compact group of filing cabinets and card indices.

Quickly he took out a file card and wrote the name, Helen Hanover, on it. After that he placed it in its alphabetical place in one of the card files.

Next he took a letter folio and typed her name on the filing tab. This he placed with others in a filing cabinet drawer. His fingers paused over the name Harvey Trent in the file, lifting out the folio. From it he extracted a picture of Harvey and inspected it briefly.

"So you've found another recruit, Mr. Trent," he said softly. Replacing the picture he closed the drawer and pressed a button. The entire section dropped back into the floor, leaving no sign of its existence.

Back at his desk he lifted one of the phones and spoke briefly. A few moments later he pressed the button that unlocked the door and two young men walked in.

In looks and dress these two young men seemed to belong on some college campus. The habitual innocent cheerfulness of their features was never ruffled by circumstances. A few months previous, a high government man had felt hot lead pouring into his body while he watched those unchanging, innocent faces above the spitting guns. He had died convinced that his eyes deceived him.

"I have a little job for you boys," Phil Cooger said. "A Dubuque detective, friend of Blacky Arbuster, is in Chicago on a divorce case. He needs a little assistance so he can knock off and sleep and play once in awhile. You'll find him at the Palmer House. His name's Charlie Hains. Ask for him at the desk. And whatever he pays you is O.K., get it?"

The two young men looked at each other in amazement.

"I don't get it, Moe," one of them said. "Do you?"

"I don't get it either, Schmoe," Moe answered. "Do you suppose we'll have to sweep out after the customers leave pretty soon?"

"We don't get it, Mr. Cooger," Moe pleaded, an anxious look on his face.

"It's just what I said," Phil Cooger smiled, enjoying their puzzlement. "Your job is to do what this Charlie tells you to, and incidentally report everything to me every day."

"I think I'm beginning to get something, Schmoe," Moe said.

"Me too, Moe," Schmoe agreed. "When do we start, Mr. Cooger?"

"An hour or two from now will do," Phil Cooger said. "Be careful."

"I see a little more, Moe," Schmoe said with a worried frown. "When Mr. Cooger says that to US it means he's afraid he might have to find two more boys to take our place in

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the near future."

"We'll be careful, Mr. Cooger," Moe smiled. "We know things wouldn't be the same for you without us around."

CHAPTER V

HELEN HANOVER drove her iridescent yellow coupe onto the receiving platform of the automat garage. As she stepped out a sign lit up, saying, "Be sure to get your parking ticket. Pay 50 cents."

She had the half dollar ready. When it dropped in the coin slot under the lighted sign a card dropped out.

The coin also started the parking mechanism to functioning. The coupe moved slowly into the garage, where automatic machinery would carry it to the spot denoted by the number on the card. Later, when she returned, she would have to place the card under an electric eye which would read it and then bring the automobile back out again.

If she had cared to she could have placed half a dollar in the service slot and had her car washed on the way to its cubicle. Two more half dollars would have also given it a gloss coat after the wash.

It had been two months since she first met Harvey Trent on the train. Those two months had been full of experiences and revelations that were rapidly changing her whole outlook on life and her place in existence.

Harvey had had to leave on another of his continual trips. George Granville had been the genial host, guide, and understanding companion during the first week.

After seeing Harvey off at the depot, she had been rushed through offices, laboratories, libraries, studios, and even machine shops, being introduced to dozens of people who were as old as she, or older, and who all looked no older than she did. The appearance of the women was that of twenty years of age, and that of the men was twenty-five.

She had remarked about this difference in the appearance of the men and the women. George had explained that IF, the immortality factor, seemed to arrest development at the same stage in both men and women, that a woman of twenty was at maximum development, while it took twenty-five years for a man to arrive at the same degree of physical maturity.

"IF was never a bigger word to anyone than it is to us," he had remarked smilingly. "Someday we may be able to put an equality sign after it and write a series of chemical symbols and numbers."

Helen found after the first few days that she was gaining a comprehensive picture of the group and its activities and purposes. The search for IF was divided into two distinct approaches. In the first, everyone spent occasional moments or hours on their memory books in which they jotted down whatever rose from the depths of their memories of the incidents of their lives during the years from 1845 to 1850.

She read several of these. Reading them, she began to recall her own life during those years, and to realize what a difficult task it would be to recall every uninteresting incident.

"In all probability," George had remarked gravely, "The incident that set up IF was something so insignificant that no one will recall it at all. It may have taken only a second or two. It may have been something of which no one was consciously aware, such as a strange virus from

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outer space which settled into our atmosphere and found foothold in a few hundred people before being killed by an unfavorable environment. If that's so, then there will be no chance of solving IF in this way. Still, since we don't know, it is our best bet."

THE SECOND approach to the answer to IF would, as George put it, "Ensure success eventually, even if it took a thousand years."

She visited huge laboratories where men studied individual cells isolated from the human organism and living in nutrient fluids that were carefully controlled.

These laboratories occupied the top ten floors of a fifty story, block square building a short distance from the lake in the heart of Chicago.

When they first went there, George introduced her to a short man, broad-shouldered, with the blackest hair she had ever seen. His name was Alex Potocki.

"We're all old enough so that we don't need a boss over us," George had said jokingly. "Alex is the nearest thing to a boss we have. He's the chief co-ordinator of research. In these ten, block square floors of laboratories are three hundred of us engaged on research that grows increasingly complex. All this research is devoted to one thing, the human body as a cell complex. The data must be continually co-ordinated. One man must hold this co-ordinated pattern in his mind, not because he is smarter than the others, but because that's the only way it can be done intelligently."

"Do you think you'd like to go into this work?" Alex Potocki had asked her.

"I don't know," she had replied. "You see, I've never been anything but a housewife. I don't know the first thing about science."

"I see you aren't quite used to your immortality yet," Alex laughed. "With all the future ahead of you it is a mere trifle to spend twenty or thirty years thoroughly mastering some complex subject. The normal human barely has time to do that before he is too old to make any real use of his learning. He rushes through college, getting a doctor's degree in six years. After that he spends thirty or forty years teaching or working for some company for a living, devoting his spare time to research. We, here, consider this merely a temporary task to be done and put behind us, not a life's work to engross us for all the future centuries."

"Would you like to spend a few weeks going over this?" George had asked eagerly. "After all, you will never be a housewife again, even if you marry. You must go into intellectual pursuits or become bored with life. Maybe this is it for the time being."

Helen had thought it would be interesting to really study something so vast as this research. She had agreed.

After George left, Alex took her to what he called the Induction Office. There he had taken her picture and fingerprints for the files. She was assigned an office next to his where she could retire whenever she chose. There was a small bedroom and private bath connected with her office; but she had remained on at the Palmer House, waiting until she "found herself" before making permanent plans on where to live.

During the two months since that day she had learned much. She was beginning to get an understanding of the work. Typed reports and explanations had helped. Alex's continual

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answering of her questions had helped fill in the picture.

She knew now that the human body was a complex mass of cells that had developed from one single cell. Through the successive divisions of the parent cell all the various types found in the adult body were produced.

The various types of cells fell into two distinct types. The first was the true types. These, by analogy, were as different as a horse and a fish. Of common parentage they might be, but they were totally dissimilar.

THE SECOND classification took in the cells which were different only as an electrician and a pianist might be different. In the body they might look entirely different and have different functions, but isolated and placed in controlled baths they became identical. Their differences in the body arose entirely from their specialized environments. Their differences in function arose from the differences in food intake from their surrounding medium.

This type of cell was found in a geranium stalk, for a well known example. A cell that ordinarily developed into a leaf would instead develop into a root if immersed in wet sand.

Cell geneology was an intermixture of the effects of environment and of a fixed pattern. A V type cell (one whose appearance and function changed for different environments) might produce one T type (true type) in one environment on division, and a distinctly different T type in another. Or it might produce the same T type regardless of environment. So cell geneology was a very complex thing. Most of the research work at present was on cell geneology, inextricably linked with the study of the effects of specialized environments, artificially created in the thousands of small tanks that filled the laboratory shelves everywhere.

These specialized environments not only duplicated those found in the body, but also took in chemicals and fluids never found normally in the human body.

A work arising from this first phase was that of reciprocal environments. Any cell in any environment took certain things from that environment and replaced them with other things. The things it took were its food. The things it put back were its waste products. Part of the food of one cell might be waste products of some other cell, and part of its waste products might in turn become the food of still another cell.

Each cell, due to inherent properties, selected only the food it liked from any environment, leaving the rest of the environment intact, except for throwing out its waste products. This interchanging of the roll of food and waste in any aggregate of cells was extremely complex.

Every phase of this complexity was being patiently isolated and studied in the thousands of experiments going on all the time by the scientists. The results were sent to the co-ordinating department.

This whole work, cell geneology and environment analysis, was lumped under the heading of middle stage research, or body chemistry. There were in addition two other stages of research; nuclear research which probed into the physical and chemical structure of the cell itself, and organ research, which used the techniques of middle stage research on body organs intact.

The organ research labs contained tanks with hearts, glands, stomachs,

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and every other type of organ, living in controlled environments, with their waste products subject to continued analysis. The various organs of the living body were not only subjected to environments normally found in the body itself, but also to environments never found in the living body.

THOUSANDS of various chemicals were introduced into the environment of every isolated organ, one at a time, and their effects on that organ studied.

"Any one of these chemicals might be the IF factor," Alex had explained. "We have the research as a whole far enough along now so that, say, on Monday we can start research on some particular chemical compound, and by the following Monday have its detailed effects on every organ and cell in the body tabulated. We can know, for example, that the chemical retards production of some hormone produced by some gland by a certain amount, the effects of this retardation on the body as a whole, and what becomes of the chemical during this action. We can know that it changes the cell geneology in certain respects, and know those changes in detail. We have, for example, seventy-eight different chemicals that we call M substances. We call them that because they produce cell types not ordinarily developed in the body. These new cell types are nearly all of the type known as cancer. That is, they develop by rapid division into cancerous tissue. With all of them, once the M substance had produced them, they become a true mutation and develop in the normal body environment into malignant tissue without needing any more of the M substance to help them along."

Now, after two months, Helen was beginning to see how this stupendous research project might eventually find the IF factor. By systematically introducing every known substance into the research and tabulating its effects, eventually the substance that was the IF factor would be used. The study of its function in the body would reveal it for what it really was.

She had gotten acquainted with different workers and listened to them talk about their work. Each one practically lived and breathed his own isolated part. One, for example, studied only type E-40 cells. For ten years he had spent eight hours a day on the one type of cell. He had developed an intuitive atunement with that type, so that he could sense its reactions to new substances, feel it withdraw in fear, or advance hungrily, or squat indifferently as the strange, ionic fields of an intruder touched its sensitive skin. To him it was not a cell but a living thing complete in itself, just as surely as the tiger in the jungle or the trout in the swift mountain stream. In its function and structure it was beautiful beyond the beauty of a painted scene or the strains from an orchestra or the rhythm of a dancer.

And now, though her understanding could comprehend all this and stand breathless before its magnitude, there had grown within her a realization that it was not for her. It was not that it was too complex, and too full of microscopic details for her to find a place in it. She knew that in ten years she could become one of these scientists. It was no feeling of incapability in her that had brought her to the decision to turn away from this. It was something different, a feeling that such

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a life was inadequate for her.

The study of this research project had opened her eyes at last to the true magnitude of the meaning of being immortal: with endless years ahead to grow mentally, with all the inexhaustible possibilities open to mankind through teamwork over the ages, with the unlimited possibilities for perfection and attainment that were denied those who withered and died at the moment of their greatest promise.

With her eyes opened she remembered her years of blindness and groping in the darkness of mortal surroundings. She felt again the heartaches, the despair, the hopeless quest. If it were not for the chance meeting with Harvey she would be once again embarking on a course that would lead to a lonely turning away from a fresh grave that all too soon had claimed the aged corpse of one who in his prime had held her in his arms and stood with her at the altar, and whispered, "Until death do us part."

SHE REMEMBERED, and wondered how many others there were that were doomed to continue on the path she had escaped by chance. If she could find even one of these she would feel better. She owed a debt to some one of these unfortunates. Until he or she had been found and lifted up into this little world of immortality within the world of mortality as she had been, she couldn't feel free to enjoy it herself.

Part of that feeling, she knew, was due to her love for Harvey, and her womanlike feeling that the work of the man she loved was better than other vocations. Yet she also knew that it lay deeper than that. Perhaps someplace there was someone who, like her, had stood beside the grave of a loved one and looked into a hopelessly repetitive future, and was about to cut off that future with deliberate intent, not knowing what promise and what potentialities for fulfillment of life existed here.

If she entered the work of the research project that unknown person might do that which could never be undone. True, if she entered the project it might be she who would accomplish the last crucial bit of work that would open up the promise of immortality to ALL mankind. That was a remote possibility compared to the more easily understood one of finding one of the lost immortals, and bringing one more into the fold.

So she had made up her mind, and now she was going to break the news to Alex Potocki. After that she would go back to George Granville and ask for a roving commission like Harvey's.

Engrossed in these thoughts, she did not look up when someone blocked her way into the building. She stepped to one side in an attempt to pass. The vague figure in front of her moved with her. Annoyed, she glanced up. Cold shock struck her with an almost physical violence.

Agnes stood there, blocking her way into the building; and on her aging face was a smile of malicious triumph.

Numbly Helen looked at her daughter. It had been only a few months, but it seemed like something in the long forgotten past. She stepped back. Alarm, revulsion and fear of the flame of hatred in Agnes' eyes, sent icy fingers into her mind.

"Hello, Agnes," she said, feeling her heart pounding painfully against her ribs.

"Hello, *mother*," Agnes gritted. "I thought it was about time you and

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I have a little talk. Do you mind?"

"Why, no," Helen replied, her frantic thoughts searching for some way to escape. "There's a restaurant on the tenth floor of this building. Should we talk there over a cup of coffee?"

"If you think you can drink it," Agnes mocked politely. The flame in her eyes veiled. "After you, mother dear," she said.

Feeling the dreams and hopes, she had found so recently, tumbling into depths of oblivion and despair, Helen pushed through the swinging doors into the building.

"Please, Agnes," she said, turning around and putting a pleading hand on her daughter's arm. "Can't we just drop all this? Surely there can be nothing you want of me. Carl left you over a million dollars. I've been through so much with you, and to no avail. I can't take any more."

The sneering, taunting, mocking smile of hate remained unmoved. Agnes shook her head slowly.

"But what good can it do?" Helen asked. "What do you want of me?" She looked into her daughter's eyes and shuddered at what she saw there. Turning away, she went toward the elevators.

CHAPTER VI

THE TENTH floor restaurant of the Science Building was a thing of strange beauty. Occupying the full square block of floor space, it was a garden of flowers, lawns, shrubs, and dwarf trees.

The waiter led Helen and Agnes to a small table next to a dwarf fruit tree. Apples and pears glistened in ripe invitation from its low branches. A bright yellow canary perched saucily on a weak branch, singing as if it thought it could drown out all other sounds.

The smell of freshly mown grass mingled with the scent of a thousand flowers. Almost circling their table was a winding brook, its rocky bed stirring the crystal clear, swiftly moving stream into tortuous swirlings. A large trout flirted its tail playfully on the surface as they sat down.

From a distance came the sound of an organ playing. The ceiling, though only ten feet overhead, was so skillfully constructed of translucent plastic of sky blue that it seemed almost to be a summer sky far above.

No other table was visible. When the waiter took their order and departed they seemed alone in a fairyland far from the heart of the largest city in the world.

Neither Helen nor Agnes seemed to be aware of all this. The canary, frightened by the tense atmosphere that clothed these two visitors, took wing with a flash of gold. The trout disappeared underneath the grassy overhang of the brook. And the two were alone.

"Are you surprised that I knew where to find you?" Agnes asked derisively.

"I hadn't thought about it," Helen answered in surprise. "I assumed it was a chance meeting. Wasn't it?"

"No," Agnes gloated. "I know all about you. I'm going to continue knowing all about you. Wherever you go, whatever you do, you're going to find me just around the corner waiting for you."

"What do you mean?" Helen asked, her heart filled with a nameless dread.

"Here's what I mean," Agnes said. "Right now your new boy friend is getting a letter from me telling him how old you are, and warning him

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that you will steal his youth as you did father's and mine."

"Yes?" Helen said, amused.

"I don't think he will call me mad," Agnes said confidently. "I enclosed a society clipping from a 1935 newspaper that showed you and father. That will prove it to him."

"Perhaps it would interest you to learn that he knows how old I am," Helen said.

"I don't believe that," Agnes retorted.

"It's the truth," Helen murmured. "Look here, Agnes. If you'll listen to me I want to tell you a few things I didn't know when I left Dubuque. Will you listen?"

There was no reply, so Helen went on.

"You think my seemingly eternal youth is due to some vampirish principle I use," she said. "Since I didn't know why I never grow old, I couldn't deny it. But I've learned that there are others like me. My boy friend as you call him is the same as I. There are hundreds of others. And our youth is due to something we haven't learned the secret of yet, but are going to learn before long. When that secret is found you'll be able to use it and so will everyone else in the world. Believe me, if I knew how, I would give you the same eternal life I have."

"I don't believe it," Agnes reitterated.

"You MUST believe it," Helen said. "You're my daughter. In spite of your hatred of me, your mother, I would give you what I have if it were possible. It's something perfectly natural. We just don't know what it is yet."

"Words!" Agnes exclaimed. "Do you expect me to believe you? If there's such a group you've been to them before. You KNOW the secret. You'll never give it to me."

She stood up, quivering with rage.

"So Harvey Trent is the same as you," she said. "Well, I swore on father's deathbed that I would make you pay a hundred fold for all the misery you've caused me. And I will. I'll find other ways to torment you. I'll follow you wherever you go. I have a million dollars. Yes. I'll spend every cent of it to make you suffer."

SHE TURNED her back and walked hurriedly along the path until she was out of sight. Helen watched her go without moving. There was a look of intense pity in her eyes.

"She must have hired a detective to follow me," she thought. Her decision to turn down research and travel in search of other immortals came back to her. Now there was all the more reason. If she stayed here Agnes would haunt her. If she travelled it would be possible to elude the detective and see to it that her daughter didn't know where to find her.

Suddenly a longing rose up in her to see Harvey and talk about it to him. She decided to call George Granville and find out where Harvey was now, and join him.

At the elevator bank she hesitated. She should go up and tell Alex Potocki about her decision first.

She let two elevators go while she remained undecided.

"I can call George from upstairs," she argued. "But also I can call Alex from George's. I should tell Alex what my decision is before seeing George; but maybe I'd better talk it over with George before definitely telling Alex that I'm not going into research."

In the last analysis it was human

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values that carried the decision. George Granville, the towering giant with his genial, understanding smile won over Alex Potocki, the short broadshouldered scientist with his jet black hair and preciseness of action. She took an elevator going down.

She called George from a pay phone on the first floor, telling him she was coming over. On the way to the automat garage, and on the drive to George's place, she tried to spot whoever might be following her. There seemed to be no one at all. The faces behind her changed continually. The cars in back of her that looked suspicious always turned at the next corner and never came back.

George met her at the door to his flat. He listened while she told him of her meeting with Agnes, of her decision that had already been made to go on the road, and how Agnes' madness had made that decision all the more imperative.

"Alex will be very disappointed," George said. "He's been taking a great personal interest in you. He told me only yesterday that he's been preparing a special lab room as a surprise for you, to be all yours as soon as you tell him you're ready to go ahead on research."

"That's too bad," Helen said, an expression of mental pain clouding her face. "I like Alex."

"But you love Harvey," George said with a smile.

"Yes," Helen said frankly. "Strange, that after so many lifetimes I can still fall in love. Sometimes I marvel at myself, that I could love Carl so devotedly for forty years, and with his last words of devotion and worship still ringing in my ears I could lay that love aside like a discarded cloak and put on another."

"There's nothing so amazing about it," George said. "It was a completed picture. If it hadn't been completed, final, you couldn't have done it. A week before, you wouldn't have looked twice at Harvey. You wouldn't have noticed his lapel emblem. You would have passed him by without seeing him."

"Where is Harvey?" Helen asked.

"On his way here," George said. "He's bringing a new recruit."

"He'll be here? Today?" Helen asked, a glad note in her voice.

George nodded. "Should be here any minute," he said, glancing at the clock. "Your daughter, Agnes, seems a trifle unbalanced on your eternal youth doesn't she?"

"It seems so," Helen replied. "It worries me, her making a solemn oath on Carl's deathbed to see that I suffer."

"That's why I'm wondering," George said slowly. "It's possible, now that she knows there are several of us, that she might make trouble for us."

"But how can she?" Helen exclaimed in surprise.

"Did it ever occur to you," George asked quietly, "why we don't simply come out and announce our existence and ask all immortals to come forward?"

HELEN caught her breath sharply. That question had been in her subconscious without ever rising to the surface.

"There are many reasons why we don't," George went on. "For one, the whole economy of the nation is based on the assumption that everyone dies. The only exception to that is the corporation, which theoretically can live forever. The corporation, however, is not an individual and cannot think. What do you think would

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happen if the information got out that there were over seven hundred people in Chicago and spread over the country who were each a century and a half old and from all signs would live forever? First of all there would be an investigation which would disclose that we have accumulated assets of over four hundred million dollars, and that we own the patents to a great many of the key inventions of our modern industry. It would be found out that we have an area of ten square city blocks of research laboratories devoted exclusively to the study of the human body.

"About that time Congress would get high handed and seize our research records. Then there would be a big blowup. It would be discovered that we had the cure for cancer and that we hadn't seen fit to give it to the world yet, so that the millions of dollars spent on cancer research each year could be spent buying rouell drinks instead of going into research. This, and many other important things we have discovered but have not made available to the public, would lead Congress and the American people to conclude that we were hoarding our discoveries and planning to take over the United States and perhaps the world with them."

George stood up and went over to the bar to pour a drink.

"The resentment your daughter has against you is just one example of the universal resentment that would grow against us. We would be forced to disband and spread and lose our unity and our potentiality for eventual good. No doubt many of us would be killed by mob violence. Stories would grow. I rather imagine the research "machine" would become in the public eye a huge, horrible monster where we dissect living humans and prey on the innocent public to preserve our immortality. The thousands of people that disappear every year would automatically be pictured as winding up in our ghoulish laboratories, brought in through secret underground entrances to be tortured and cut up. The living hearts pumping away in glass tanks for all to see, the lungs in their tanks, breathing in monstrous isolation, all would add to the fuel.

"That's why we have been so secretive. I more or less assumed you would know all that without being told. That's why I didn't swear you to secrecy. After all, you kept your own secret all these years!"

"I'm sorry. Terribly sorry," Helen said. "I didn't think. I thought I saw a way to give Agnes hope, and perhaps help her. She is my daughter."

"Well, don't let it bother you," George said, handing her a glass of wine. "I doubt if any of those things will happen. I think we'd better see what can be done about your daughter before she has a chance to carry on her mad schemes."

The door chimes interrupted them.

"That must be Harvey!" Helen exclaimed.

GEORGE pressed the button that unlocked the downstairs entrance and then opened the front door. He and Helen stood there waiting for Harvey.

The sound of footsteps came up from below, growing louder with each turn in the winding stairs.

A young lady came into sight first, followed by the familiar face of Harvey. An arrow of jealousy shot into Helen's heart. The new recruit was a woman.

The next hour saw a repetition of her own first visit to this place. The

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new recruit was named Alice Heeb. She seemed to radiate health and beauty to Helen's jealous eyes.

When Alice turned to Harvey she had a habit of laying her hand on his arm possessively. Her life, it developed, had not been the prosaic one of a housewife who had just buried her husband. It had been the more glamorous one of travel over the world, careers, and adventure.

Harvey's eyes as they occasionally looked at Helen were warm with unspoken feeling, yet Helen seemed to see the same warmth as he looked at Alice.

"May I go in the other room and lay down for awhile?" she finally asked George. She felt she had to be alone or give way to open despair.

"Why yes!" George said, giving her a worried look.

Helen excused herself and went into another room. When she tried to close the door behind her Harvey was there. He closed the door and stood with his back to it, looking at her.

"Aren't you going to welcome me?" he asked softly.

"That woman?" Helen asked helplessly.

"Is just another recruit," Harvey laughed. "I believe you're jealous!"

"Not jealous," Helen said, tears that she had held back now forcing their way out. "It's just that everything seemed the same as it was when I first came here. I—I've—Agnes met me today and told me she had sworn to follow me and torment me for the rest of her life. I told her about the immortals because I thought it might give her hope. Now I find that I've endangered the whole group. I—I feel pretty low, I guess."

"Forget it," Harvey said, putting his arms around her and lifting her face so that he could look in her eyes. "For your information I've told Alice Heeb all about us."

"You have?" Helen asked weakly.

Harvey kissed her on the lips.

"Now come back in the other room and be the hostess," he said softly.

GEORGE WAS explaining to Alice about the attempts to find the immortality factor by cross checking memory.

"First," he was saying. "You must try to recall the exact dates of your various movements. That gives you a sort of skeleton outline of your life during the period that it happened. For example, you moved into a certain house on a certain date. You moved away on another date. That's the skeleton. We cross check it with the others. After you get that outline more or less accurate and complete you have to start filling it in. You try to remember incidents—every little incident of the first day when you moved there. One by one the little things you've completely forgotten will come back. You write them down. Fill in what you recall later. And all the time we keep comparing with other records.

"Also, you will get a chance to read some of these other post mortem diaries. Reading them will help you recall other things you'd forgotten. Someday we'll uncover the one thing we all did without exception. That thing will contain the answer to IF."

"Tell us about yourself," Helen interrupted. "It was only a short time ago that I was here for the first time."

"Then you can understand what a relief it is to be able to speak freely," Alice Heeb said with an understanding glance from Helen to Harvey. "I know about you already, Helen. That's about all Harvey would talk about. I met him on a street corner in New York, day before yesterday. Noticed his lapel emblem and

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put two and two together. Quick a pleasant shock!

"I was born in Boston in 1827, married when I was eighteen, and later moved to Philadelphia. Born and raised a catholic, I never married again after my husband died. Instead I turned to the stage and carved out quite a career for myself during the fifteen years I followed that.

"All the time I was studying, trying to find out if anything was actually known about people who were immortal. All I could get out of the Church was an occasional pokerfaced admission that it was known there were others like me."

"You mean the Catholic Church knows you were born in 1827?" George asked.

"That's right," Alice replied, smiling. "Not only do they know, but every priest in the country knows me by sight. I know that because I have gone to strange towns and to priests I've never seen before, and they greet me by name and seem to know my entire history."

"Well I'll be darned!" George exclaimed.

"About the turn of the century," Alice went on. "I wrote for eight or ten years. Even now I occasionally write a book under some pen name or other. It gives me a steady income. Since the war I've been living in New York. I enjoy living. Got used to always staying twenty long ago. The only thing I hate is having to pull up stakes and move when my friends start to get old. If I didn't they'd begin to wonder. It hasn't been so bad though. Since the thirties, beauty parlors have been given the credit for my eternally youthful appearance. The alibi of a good beautician has made it possible for me to stay in one place twenty years at a stretch."

She turned impulsively to George. "What about you, George?" she asked. "I've heard Helen's and Harvey's stories already. "What's yours?"

"Mine is a sad tale," George said with a shy smile. "Harvey and Helen saw their loved ones die time after time. You moved about and managed to enjoy your own life without any entanglements after one experience with loved ones. I don't know where I was born or how old I am."

"You what?" Helen and Alice exclaimed in unison.

"The earliest I can remember," George said quietly, "I was something of an enigma to those around me. A sort of a village idiot in a small town in New Hampshire. I can still recall my earliest memory. I was standing in front of the local store. Some small boys were running down the street like the devil was after them. There was a dull throb on the side of my head. I was looking at things with absolutely no memory at all. I learned by patient inquiry that I was the village idiot, harmless, and fed whenever I asked for food, by whatever housewife I asked. There seemed to be a village superstition that anyone who refused to feed me when I was hungry would meet with calamity, and those who fed me would have good luck."

HE PAUSED for a moment. The room was without sound.

"That was in 1905," he went on. "I had wandered into the village one day in 1891, according to the local barber, when I asked him. No one knew where I had come from. With my questioning the people began to realize that I had 'good sense' again. They were so happy about it that they chipped in and bought me some clothes and gave me a bath and bought me a railroad ticket out of town. I never went back."

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There was a wistful note to his voice.

"Then what happened?" Alice asked breathlessly.

"Nothing much," George said. "I seemed to have left town with the name George Granville tagged to me. I've kept it through force of habit. My mind cleared rapidly, but I could never recall my life as the village idiot, nor anything before that. My ticket took me to a town where there was a smelter. I started working in the smelter, learned to read in the evenings from my landlady, an elderly woman who liked to mother me. She gave me a liking for good books and philosophy.

"After ten years of that my landlady died. Rather than find another one I bought another railroad ticket and moved on. In 1920 I decided to go to college. After graduating from college I went into business. I opened a wholesale hardware supply and built it up to a large concern. In 1935 I discovered that one of my employees was using dyes to make himself look middle aged. We made our mutual confession and got to thinking maybe there were others in the world that were deathless. I had the happy thought of combining the Maple leaf with the infinity sign. From 1935 to 1941 we uncovered fifty-two others. They were all men. When the second World War broke out we of course went into the army. Twenty of us lived through it.

"We pooled our resources and bought a site not far from Chicago to use as our headquarters. That was when we found Harvey. A little later we found Alex Potocki who was a born organizer. It was Alex who built up the research machine after we built the Science Building when a large Loop building was condemned and ordered torn down."

"So you are the founder of the Society of Immortals!" Alice breathed.

"Yes," George smiled. "From village idiot to riches; a success story."

"It must have been that those kids hit you on the head with a rock or something," Alice said, her face full of sympathy.

"That's right," George agreed. "The luckiest thing that ever happened to me, no doubt. If I hadn't had that blow on the head I might still be a village idiot, or more likely, they would have burned me at the stake someday for not growing old."

Harvey looked slyly at Helen and winked knowingly. It was obvious that Alice had at last fallen. She was examining George's head as if it had just been hurt. And George seemed to be enjoying it!

CHAPTER VII

HELEN STOOD alone on the floor of the lab, endless rows of tanks stretching away into the distance. She recognized it as organ research. Several eyes watched her from a nearby tank,—unblinking, egg-like orbs that seemed to see and to be aware.

She was dreaming. She wanted to awaken. Yet she clung to the dream with horrible fascination.

Somewhere Agnes was looking for her. Agnes was in the lab looking for her. She had a branding iron that she planned on using. She was going to press it against her forehead and brand her with the symbol of eternal life.

There was a sound of stealthy footsteps. Helen ran in panic, ran between rows of tanks with staring eyes. The footsteps were gaining on her. She turned to look and it was two young men with innocent grins on their faces. She sighed with relief and stopped running. They ran past her without seeming to know

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she was there.

They were in a dark sedan. It turned and disappeared between two rows of tanks.

Alice Heeb was in a tank, swimming underwater and looking out at Helen. She wondered why Alice didn't get out of the tank, and then saw that Alice's heart was fastened in the tank. George, in the white of the lab technician, was connecting tubes to it through the glass. There was blood on his head. He had been hurt.

Alex appeared suddenly in front of her and asked her what she was doing.

"I'm not going into research," she said firmly.

"Come with me," Alex said. He took her hand and led her into another room. "This is to be your own private research lab," he explained.

"But I'm not going into research!" she objected.

Alex turned to look at her, and it was Agnes, firmly gripping her hand. She pulled back. Agnes dragged her into the room. She had a branding iron in her other hand and was trying to swing it around so she could brand Helen on the forehead.

Helen broke away and ran. She tried to remember which aisle to run down to reach George. She had to reach him and find out where Harvey was.

Agnes was right behind her. She could feel the heat of the glowing branding iron at her back. Just ahead was a dwarf fruit tree with apples and pears on it. She reached it and stopped.

Agnes sneered at her, and turned and went away.

A sedan appeared and drove by slowly. The two young men were in it. They didn't look at her. Alex was riding in the back seat of the sedan. He looked right at her and didn't seem to know her.

There was a brook running at her feet. She looked into it and saw hearts beating slowly, with tubes running from them and going out of sight under the grassy bank of the stream.

She had to do something. She couldn't remember what it was she had to do. Suddenly she remembered. She had told Agnes about the lab. She had to find Alex and warn him.

She was on the elevator, but it was going down and she wanted to go up. Alex was up! The crowd pushed her out of the elevator. She tried to get back in but the crowd kept pushing her out.

Suddenly she was in the research labs again. She passed George and Alice. She noticed that George had Alice's heart in another tank now. He had her stomach out and was trying to cut it loose.

Alice saw her and waved cheerily. She waved back and kept moving between the rows of tanks.

The sedan appeared ahead and drove toward her. When it passed she saw the two young men in it. One of them was chewing gum. They didn't look at her.

She looked after the car wondering why Alex wasn't in it.

HARVEY appeared up ahead. He saw her and waved for her to hurry. She ran toward him, panic nipping at her heels. Each tank she passed there was a young man standing in the shadows, chewing gum and not looking at her.

Alex appeared suddenly between her and Harvey. He held his arms as if to stop her. His face was filled with rage. His eyes were deep black pits of anger. She heard a crash of glass breaking. A policeman had an

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ax and was breaking a tank.

Water was running through jagged holes in the tank. Hearts were flopping around on the bottom like fish.

The place was full of policemen, all with axes.

"You're responsible for this," Alex shouted.

Agnes appeared, a look of triumph on her face. People were coming in and looking at the floundering hearts in the empty tanks. Agnes was laughing insanely, her eyes wild.

The people were pointing at her. Some of them started after her.

"No!" she said, holding her hand up as if to stop them. "No! You don't know what you're doing!"

"Hurry!" It was Harvey's voice. She turned. He was still there, closer now. George and Alice were with him.

She broke into a run. The police and the people were swarming in front of her, blocking off her escape. Agnes' face appeared in front of her, screaming at her.

For a moment she couldn't see Harvey. Then she saw him and he was farther away than ever. She called to him, her voice nothing more than a sob of despair.

Everything around her was falling and crumbling. She knew that Agnes had managed to undermine the Science Building in some way.

Alice was standing beside a piano, singing. George was sitting at the piano, playing the accompaniment. Both of them and the piano were sliding rapidly down the steeply slanting lab floor, unaware that the building was falling.

Harvey was putting on his topcoat.

"Run!" she shouted hoarsely. He looked up at her and smiled, then went on putting on his coat. With a horrible grinding roar everything fell on her.

She opened her eyes. Alice was standing over her, pinning her to the bed. There was a worried look on her face. Her silky white nightgown revealed her firm, lovely body. A flash of lightning lit up the hotel room briefly. A crash of thunder followed the flash a second after.

"For gosh sakes," Alice said. "Do you always have nightmares when there's a storm?"

Recollection flooded Helen's mind, but with it came no relief.

"Let's go, Alice," she commanded. "I've got to use the phone."

Alice stepped back. Helen sat up and placed her feet over the edge of the bed, trying to find her slippers. She gave up and crossed the room barefooted to the desk phone.

Alice followed her anxiously and turned on the light for her so she could see to dial.

"What's the matter?" Alice demanded.

Helen dialed George's number with shaking fingers without answering Alice's question. The phone at the other end began ringing. No one answered.

Alice repeated her question.

"That nightmare made me remember something," Helen said, gnawing her fingernails nervously.

She tried Harvey's number. The phone rang without an answer.

"Get dressed, Alice," she ordered. "We've got to get out of here before it's too late!"

"But where'll we go in a storm like this?" Alice objected.

Helen dropped the receiver on its cradle and started to dress. Alice followed her example, obviously not liking it.

The two girls hid their uncombed hair under their hats on the way down the hall to the elevator.

"We're going to George's," Helen volunteered suddenly.

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"Well," Alice said, relieved. "At least I got ONE sensible statement out of you." She squeezed Helen's arm reassuringly.

IN THE hotel garage Helen asked the night attendant if there were some other car she could take than her own. She gave her name. The attendant brought out a sleek sedan of 1968 vintage.

"Runs all right, anyway," he apologized.

Helen got behind the wheel and Alice climbed in on the other side. The attendant closed the switch that opened the outer doors.

The rain pelted in, the wind hurling it across the dry concrete floor.

As the attendant waved violently for Helen to hurry out she pressed down on the gas. The car moved out into the storm, the windshield swipes automatically starting with the first sign of moisture.

The headlights had also gone on automatically as the darkness affected the selenium control. They sent twin shafts of brightness into the falling torrents as Helen turned the car into the lane that led up to the street.

Water formed pools and rushing streams in the street. The black sky was shattered continually by jagged cracks of incandescence. The wild roar of thunder cowed the very Earth.

Helen hunched over the wheel, her face pale and drawn. Alice watched her silently, resigned to waiting for events to explain this mad ride.

The streets were deserted. Far ahead the dim lights of an oncoming car turned off to the left. Wind dashed sheets of rain against the overworked swipes, distorting the view dangerously.

Once the car skidded sickeningly for a moment before the wheels gripped the road again. To the north and west fire sirens sounded faintly through the din of thunder.

Alice's eyes lighted up with interest as she recognized landmarks that told they were only a block or two away from George's apartment. Ahead there seemed to be cars blocking the street. Large red spotlights peered at them drunkenly. Dark shadows moved in the street.

Helen slowed the car to a crawl. Her eyes were almost against the windshield as she peered ahead.

Without warning the whole sky exploded into a sheet of electric fire that lit up the surroundings with the brightness of day. Revealed were fire trucks and men in glistening raincoats. Some of these men were dragging hoses. Others were carrying stretchers to waiting ambulances.

This whole activity was centered on a mass of wrecked and grotesquely piled masonry from which hungry flames darted, to be driven back by the driving rain.

This was all that was left of the brownstone mansion whose top floor had been George's home.

Helen found herself repeating, "I was right. I was right. I could have saved him if I'd remembered. It's my fault."

"If you'd remembered what?" Alice said, shaking her.

"Alex Potocki in the back seat," Helen said listlessly.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RAIN beat against the car with an unsteady roaring undertone while the continual shattering roll of thunder formed the main theme of the bacchanal orchestration. The play was a horror picture, a unique version of the old movie, with the scenes going on continually but lit up in flickering sequence by

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the continual jagged flashes of lightning in the sullen sky.

The spectators were two. They sat frozen to their seats, watching through the rain swept windshield of the car as the swipes futilely cleared away the rain.

Their eyes followed each tarpaulin covered stretcher, trying by sheer force of will to see underneath the drab cover and discover if this one or that carried George Granville.

The large red warning lights of the fire trucks and ambulances waved back and forth drunkenly like batons of hellish directors who were themselves invisible.

Holding the center of the stage was the shapeless pile of stone and splintered wood that had been the three story brownstone flat. Red tongues of fire licked out here and there like festering wounds. Dark figures moved here and there, pulling aside debris in search of more bodies.

"It must have been Q.P.," Alice said breathlessly. "You know, that explosive they used in World War III that explodes inwardly instead of outwardly, so that it doesn't throw things all over."

The full realization of what must have happened penetrated her bewildered senses. She began to weep.

"Don't cry, Alice," Helen said. "If you have any faith in destiny you know that neither George nor Harvey COULD have been killed."

Her eyes were caught by a moving figure that stumbled away to the side, coming toward the car. Her hand clutched Alice's arm. Alice looked up and followed her gaze. A lightning flash lit up the man briefly.

"George!" the two girls exclaimed in unison.

They were out of the car into the rain. Unmindful of it they stumbled through puddles to the staggering figure and held it up between them. Alice was crying and laughing at the same time.

"Was Harvey in there?" Helen asked.

George seemed to shake his tousled blond head in the negative. Alice opened the rear door of the sedan and climbed in, pulling on George while Helen pushed.

Other figures were coming toward the car, glistening, raincoat clad figures. Helen slammed the rear door and climbed behind the wheel. The motor was still running.

Slipping the car into reverse she backed with roaring motor until a side street appeared. The men outside were running after the car now.

With a clash of gears Helen slipped into low and twisted the wheel, heading the car down the side street. A disjointed report from the back seat, consisting of words from Alice and groans and mutterings from George, told that he would live. No bones were broken.

On hearing that, Helen slowed the car to a crawl. She had to wait until George told her where Harvey was. Harvey didn't have a place of his own in Chicago. When he brought in a recruit he either stayed at a hotel or at George's.

The wailing of sirens came from all directions now. To the north the sky was red from a fire someplace. Just ahead a lonely red light indicated an arterial stop. Some of the sirens suddenly became louder. Fire trucks and ambulances shot past the intersection headed toward the Chicago loop, their motors roaring.

IT WAS AS insane as had been her nightmare, Helen thought. And it seemed too much like a nightmare to be real. It was real, though. No thunder could be so nerve shattering in

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a dream. No lightning could be so bright.

Other fire trucks hurried by as she reached the corner and stopped. She sat there, waiting and watching. In the rear view mirror she could see Alice holding a scarf out the window to get it wet, and wiping away blood to see the extent of damage to George. His head had been a bloody mess.

She brushed away the sickening thought that he might have received another blow on the head that would leave him the village idiot again. She brushed the thought away, and it returned with reinforcements. Why didn't George speak up and tell her where to find Harvey? Why didn't he say something intelligible? Why didn't he say even ONE WORD?

The only words were those of Alice. Soft mothering words of tenderness and love.

And outside the whole world was mad, caught in a battle of raw elements, the Universe destroyed except for this one small island of insane forces about her.

As if to accentuate the madness of what was left she turned her head in time to see a car dart in from a side street a block away and pause in front of an oncoming fire truck that picked it up and tossed it neatly over on its back.

Flames leaped out of the back of the overturned passenger car. Two ambulances stopped. Other ambulances and other fire trucks circled the smashup with barely a pause and continued on toward the loop.

She pulled her eyes away from the strangely unreal scene a block away. She had to know now. With slow deliberation she turned around and faced the back of the car.

"George," she said loudly above the noises of the storm. "George. Where's Harvey?"

As she looked she saw what she had known all along she would see. George's eyes carried no light of calm intelligence such as they always had before. They were dull and stupid and uncomprehending, the bewildered eyes of an idiot who finds himself transported from a village scene in 1905 to the interior of a sedan in 1974.

Alice took George's unresisting head in her arms and rocked back and forth, moaning softly. And still the mad sky flashed, and thunder roared with brittle sound, and rain came down to swell the torrents in the street.

"There's only one thing to do," Helen said suddenly in a voice that sounded shrill and strange to her. When she said it everything seemed to fall into place. It was the only answer.

It meant not looking for Harvey. It meant not going back to the hotel. But first... She fumbled through her purse. There was nearly five hundred dollars and her gas credit card. She kissed the credit card before slipping it back in her purse.

Then she turned into the arterial and headed north. In Evanston she turned west. The blackness of night was being replaced by a sickly grey as the sun tried to get through. As she left Evanston and entered the farm area she could see the clouds turning white on the horizon.

The downpour slacked off until it was a summer freshet, a sprinkle, and finally ceased altogether. In the fields there were still rushing streams that tore jagged rips in the fertile land and undermined stalks of green corn.

AT ELGIN she stopped at a service station and slipped her credit card under the electric eye, fill-

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ing her tank with gas. When the bell rang, indicating the tank was full, she hung the hose back where it belonged. The eye released her credit card. She was thankful that there were no humans around to see her and remember her later. She had enough gas in the tank to take them out of Illinois. That was all that mattered.

There was a lump in her throat as she climbed back behind the wheel. Alice was trying to explain to George what had happened. She was trying so hard to keep smiling as if there were nothing wrong.

Helen quickly turned her face away. Alice had been a skilled actress. She could smile and coax and act as if things were all right; but she couldn't.

She shut her ears to the horrible sound of childlike, uncomprehending questions George asked. She shut her mind to the future. She held her eyes on the road and thought only of getting out of Illinois.

In the rear view mirror she caught a puzzled glance from Alice occasionally. She knew Alice wanted to know more of where they were going. She didn't know herself.

All she knew was that in a nightmare she had seen Alex in the back of a car with two young men in the front seat, and that Alex should not have been there. What that meant, whether it had any meaning or not, she didn't know. Yet, because of it she had rushed madly to George's place only to find it in ruins and George badly hurt, his mind switched back to the forgotten past. From a scientific standpoint that lent probability to her unformulated feeling being grounded in facts. She had gone strictly on feeling.

Now, as she drove, she tried to place it on a more rational basis.

"The whole nightmare," she said to herself, "was created out of a combination of things already in my mind. It was probably an end product of several problems. The problems were, first, who has Agnes had following me and spying on me? The two young men who were always there but never obvious. I noticed them subconsciously but not consciously, so they appeared in my dream.

"George pointed out to me the danger of letting Agnes know about the immortals. My mind dramatized this into a thriller raid on Research. Perhaps the storm was the cause of this aspect of the dream.

"George's working on Alice's heart was obviously a distorted picturization of the fact that he had won her heart that afternoon. Their being at the piano together while it slid into space across the tilted floor of the lab was a picturization of the fact that they were oblivious to the danger, whatever it was.

"But Alex had changed into Agnes! And Alex had sat in the back seat of the car the two young men had been in! This associated Alex with the danger, made him a source of danger EQUAL to that of Agnes. His changing into Agnes was symbolic; but was it symbolism or actual memory that pictured him riding in that car?"

Helen had no way of knowing. Something was there, in her subconscious, that was causing her to flee rather than go to any of the immortals for help. She was running away. She felt that every minute she stayed in Illinois increased the danger, and she didn't have the slightest idea what the danger was!

"Could it be some danger from Alex Potocki? That was utterly absurd! Alex was an immortal. Not only that, he was the founder and prime mover of Research."

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Helen scowled in concentration. She hadn't exactly liked Alex. She certainly hadn't disliked him, but there was a wide gap between like and dislike. She had respected him and perhaps held him in awe. He was more of the type conventionality would picture an immortal to be—a scientist in charge of Research, directing the detailed study of something terrifically complex.

Perhaps underneath there had been something approaching dislike or, more accurately, fear and awe. It might be that this had entered the dream a little mixed up and caused an association of Agnes, whom she feared and dreaded, with Alex, whom she feared and respected.

This conclusion didn't satisfy though. It didn't have the right mental flavor.

Of only one thing was she sure. She would be as wary as a wild animal and trust no one but Harvey. So the immediate problem was to find someplace where she and Alice and George would be safe, yet where Harvey could find them.

As if in answer to her posing of the problem a road sign approached. It said, "Dubuque. 43 miles."

Agnes would never think of Dubuque. It was out of the state of Illinois. Harvey would come to Dubuque to begin his search once he was sure she was missing and not dead. It all added up. She even knew where they would stay; a second story flat in an apartment house she owned in her own name. If she remembered correctly that flat was vacant!

She glanced in the rear view mirror. Alice and the idiot—George had become friends. George was grinning happily. He had found someone who really seemed to like him.

Helen blinked back a tear and sniffed loudly as she slowed down for the bridge across the river to Dubuque.

CHAPTER IX

IT HAPPENED so quickly. Helen had stopped the car as the traffic light turned red. It had just changed back to green and she was pressing her foot on the gas when there was a blur of motion. The right hand door opened, there was a movement of someone sliding into the seat beside her, and there was Harvey!

She was stunned. She had reconciled herself to settling down to a long, almost hopeless wait, cooped up in a room where she would have to keep watch on the street in the hopes that he might eventually appear on the sidewalk below where she could see him and run down and get him.

She wanted to laugh and cry and hug him. His nervous smile and quiet order to get going sobered her. Cars in back started to honk for her to move as she pressed down on the foot throttle and got the car in motion.

"Turn right at the next corner," Harvey said. "This car is too hot to go far in. There's a ten state alarm out for it."

As soon as he was sure she understood what he had said he turned around and looked in the back seat. Out of the corner of her eye Helen could see the color of his face change from a ruddy tan to a lead grey as he realized what had happened to George.

He turned back. Helen reached over with one hand and found his. They drove that way, with him directing her where to go. They were in the used car district after a while. Harvey had her slow down while he looked over the cars in the lots.

Finally he had her draw up to the curb. Half an hour later he came back in a 1970 Rummery transcon sedan.

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George laughed delightedly as he found the Earth apparently so unstable under his feet after the long drive. He seemed to have adopted the attitude that anything was perfectly all right so long as his new friend Alice was leading him by the hand.

Alice laughed with him, and Helen could detect no sign of the heartbreak underneath. She waited until Alice had led George into the back seat of the Rummery, then slipped into the front seat beside Harvey. She could relax now. Harvey was there.

She laid her head back and closed her eyes. Soon she knew by the sound of the tires that the heavy, noiseless car was in the country and speeding along the highway at a rate she had never had the courage to attain.

Just as she was going to sleep it occurred to her that perhaps she should be suspicious of Harvey too. Her last thought before sleep overcame her was that if Harvey were not to be trusted it would be better if she were dead.

She awoke when the car lurched off the highway into the gravel parking strip in front of a highway cafe. George's petulant voice was saying he was hungry. Alice was assuring him that this was a place where they would give them food.

Harvey's face was an expressionless mask which put on a tight smile when he saw that she was awake.

"Sleep well?" he asked, his voice subdued. She nodded her head emphatically and gave him an encouraging smile.

Sometime later they were back on the highway again.

"Where are we going?" Helen asked.

"A place on the shore of the Pacific," Harvey said without turning. "It's one of the secret places we've saved up for a rainy day."

"A rainy day?" Helen echoed.

"There's a lot you haven't had time to learn yet about our organization," Harvey explained. "One is about our emergency setups. You see, in time you learn to think of every possibility. We more or less collected in the Chicago area. We took cognition of the possibility, not only of discovery and an attempt by the government or some other group to wipe us out, but also of treachery in our own group. We formed subgroups, each of which had a secret place it could escape to, where none of those outside that little group could find them.

"This place is the one I bought. Only twenty of us know where it is."

"Does—," Helen hesitated. "Does Alex know where it is?"

"No," Harvey replied. "You sound like you suspect him of what happened last night."

HELEN told him of her nightmare, and how they had found George. Harvey listened without interrupting. After she finished he explained.

"George and I had been out driving," he said. "When the storm came up we were just coming back into Chicago. I dropped George at his place and then took the car to the garage two blocks away. I just came out of the garage when I heard the explosion. I ran up the street to where I could see what had happened. Convinced that George couldn't possibly be alive after that I didn't go any further. I knew it had been a deliberately planned job. The type of explosion was unmistakable. I went back and got my car. At the Palmer house I found you and Alice were gone. The hotel garage told me you two had borrowed an old Cadillac and gone out into the rain. I also found that the police were looking for you.

"I rushed back to the scene of the explosion and told a fireman I was a

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reporter. He gave me the story of the mysterious Cadillac that had picked up one of the victims of the explosion and escaped under fire. I knew then that you two had rescued George." Harvey's face cramped with pain as mention of George made him remember what had happened.

"I sensed by then that you must have known something was going on. Why else would you ask to borrow a car when your own was in the hotel garage? Why would you go out into the storm? Why else, when you found George would you escape rather than assuming the police would help you?

"There was no way of knowing where you would go. I had to make snap decisions. The only other place I knew of that was connected with you was Dubuque. I drove there as fast as I could."

"I drove north to Evanston and then to Elgin," Helen explained.

"That's why I didn't see you on the road," Harvey said. "I went straight west from Chicago. It was shorter."

The highway unfolded with smooth swiftness in front of them. The fluid drive turbine did its work with noiseless perfection.

"What really happened?" Helen asked finally. "Was my dream right? Is Alex Potocki really a traitor?"

"I don't know," Harvey said slowly. "Personally, I don't take too much stock in dream interpretation. It doesn't take into account the purely imaginative factors of a dream. It assumes that every incident of a dream is the result of unimaginatively put together elements. I would say that perhaps you didn't like Alex very much, and as a sort of revenge on him for your not liking him, you placed him in the roll of some sort of villain in the dream. I'm not discounting the possibility though. If he shows up I'll be more suspicious of him than of anyone else until I'm sure of him."

ALICE HAD been listening to them. She asked a question now.

"Why would any immortal do something like that? From what you've been saying there must have been a deliberate attempt to kill some, if not all, of the immortals."

"All," Harvey said, his lips a grim line. "You evidently didn't have your radio on. A terrific explosion destroyed the upper part of the Science Building at four-thirty this morning. According to an elevator boy all the workers had been called down for special duty during the storm. The latest reports before I found you were that everyone in the upper half of the building was killed.

"There were over a dozen explosions in various parts of the city. The addresses given were those where immortals lived. It looks as if a deliberate attempt was made to wipe us all out."

"But the police that were looking for us?" Helen asked, horrified.

"Probably had orders to kill you once they got you away from the hotel," Harvey said.

"But then—" Helen hesitated.

"Alex is either dead with the rest or the attempt to kill us all was his idea," Harvey said.

"But why?" Alice pleaded.

"Yes! Why?" Helen echoed.

"I wish I knew the answer," Harvey said. "But it would be insane for him to destroy Research. He's the one that created it and nursed it into its full development."

He drove in silence, the miles slipping by rapidly on the broad transcontinental highway. City after city appeared in the distance and crept forward. At the outskirts the outer lanes continued straight while the center lanes dropped down to become an underground channel through the

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city. Above, the outer lanes came together to become a city street. On the other side of the city the outer lanes separated again while the center lanes came up between them.

"We'll get there sometime tonight," Harvey said.

George had gone to sleep, his damaged mind hidden behind his broad flawless brow, his tousled blond hair soft and fresh from the gentle administrations of Alice's loving hands as she dipped her scarf in the rain the night before and patiently wiped away the blood.

Finally she slept too, her head resting against his huge shoulder, pathetic and small.

"When we get to the coast," Harvey said softly, "We'll call in a brain specialist and see what can be done about him. I think there's been enough cases like him so that they will know just what to do."

"I hope so," Helen prayed, "Oh, God, I hope so."

THE SUN outdistanced them in the race toward the ever retreating western horizon. George and Alice awoke while the car was crossing the Rockies. George was hungry and fretful so they stopped again to eat.

Helen dozed fitfully after that. Harvey had swallowed a benzedrine tablet before leaving the cafe. He would be able to drive the rest of the way all right.

When she awoke, Harvey was shaking her shoulder gently. The car stopped. The headlights disclosed a house.

"We're here, Helen," Harvey said.

Alice and George were already climbing out from in back. Helen joined them.

She saw a sight she would never forget. The house at her back was on what seemed a high table land. Fifty feet in front of her the land ended abruptly. Stretching from there to the far horizon was the ocean. A giant moon poised just above the incredibly distant horizon, forming a carpet of gold across that great expanse right up to the place where the land dropped off.

A mile or two out a toy sized freighter moved with slow dignity across the carpet of light. Millions of bright clean stars dotted the cloudless sky.

And from some invisible place down lower came the restful booming of salt waves dashing against a rocky abutment.

Helen turned to Harvey who had come up beside her.

"I think I could stay here forever," she said.

"I doubt it," Harvey said. "The tide's in right now, and the weather's perfect. But who knows? Lots of people are born inland and live most of their life there, only to discover that they were born in the wrong place and are really shore dwellers by nature."

He slipped his arm around her waist. She laid her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes, letting her nostrils sense the salt air, her ears reach for the distant sounds of sleepy shore birds, and for the silence which has a different quality on the edge of the vast Pacific than any other place in the world.

"Just twenty-fours ago I was waking up from a horrible dream!" Helen said suddenly.

"Let's get some sleep," Harvey said, kissing her.

Helen nodded contritely. "You must be dead on your feet. Over two thousand miles of driving..."

"I am pretty tired," he admitted.

They turned and went into the house. As Harvey unlocked the front door lights went on in the back.

"Jerome must have seen us drive

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in," Harvey said. "He's the caretaker. Jerome Dolpin. I got acquainted with him and his wife Martha several years ago. Martha was sick. I helped them out and sent them out here to take care of the place."

Jerome came in from the kitchen as they entered the house. He had an automatic in his hand which he lowered when he recognized Harvey.

THREE WEEKS passed slowly. They were heavenly weeks to Helen in many ways. She had a chance to be with Harvey continually and learn more about him.

The house turned out the next morning to be a long rambling lodge that had been built by a too ambitious yachting club. Concrete steps led down from it to the beach where a well built dock jutted out two hundred feet. There was a beach to the north of the dock. To the south there was a beach only at low tide, the water coming into the twenty foot embankment on which the club house was built.

At the end of the dock was a boat house. It contained two boats; a seventy foot ocean-going speed cruiser, and a twenty foot injector-jet racing boat.

Harvey took her out in the racing boat the first afternoon. After that they went nearly every day.

On the second day they saw the wreck of the Science Building in the local television news broadcast while Harvey recorded it on the television wire recorder for future playback.

The news commentator reported that it was believed to have been wrecked by an explosion of stores of chemicals being used in experiments, the explosion being set off in some unknown way by the unprecedented storm that had been raging at the time.

The list of dead had been appalling. Alex Potocki's name was among the missing.

There had been seventeen other explosions in Chicago that night. These had all, the news commentator blithely stated, been caused by lightning igniting escaping gas from leaky mains.

Aside from George Granville being listed as missing there was no mention of the four of them.

THE MORNING of the third day there, Harvey had driven from the coast to Olympia, and up to Seattle to find a brain specialist.

Three days later a truck had brought a portable X-ray, operating room equipment, and men to change a room over into a small hospital.

The four of them inspected it; three with hope in their eyes, and one with dull incomprehension.

After the workmen went away there was nothing to do but wait for the specialist to come.

They were days of heartache for Alice. George, the village idiot, was very likeable in his way. He didn't understand what had happened to him. He didn't try to understand. He liked Alice and enjoyed her constant mothering attention.

Helen and Harvey sat on the rambling front porch of the lodge while Alice would take George by the hand and go on long trips up the beach, teaching him how to dig for clams and teaching him over again when he forgot.

Whenever Helen tried to discuss the problems facing them in the near future Harvey avoided the subject.

"You must learn to think like an immortal," he chided her impatience. "You lived among mortals too long. You must learn that there are times when it's better to sit back and wait for days and days. In the coming centuries we will all, no doubt, reach the state of mind where we are con-

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tent to come to a place like this and just relax and play for anywhere from ten years to a century and just call it a vacation."

With a women's intuition she guessed that Harvey was not as idle as he tried to appear. His only trip away from the lodge had been to see about medical attention for George. There were hours when he stayed in his room—and there was a phone in his room. There were times when he locked himself in a small brick building near the lodge that had an antenna tower above it.

When he appeared after one of these absences he was always calm and unconcerned, dismissing what he had been doing with a shrug and a casual remark.

So the three weeks passed. Three uneventful weeks during which Helen, in spite of herself, absorbed some of the philosophy of patience that was so dominant a part of Harvey's nature.

Then one morning she awakened to the sound of cars outside her window. Harvey's voice came reassuringly.

"Hello doctor," he said. "I see you're prepared for anything. An ambulance, assistants, nurses."

"That's right," a strange voice answered. "I don't want to make this trip again. I'm going to do it right the first time."

"Good," Harvey said. "Come in."

This was to be the day! The specialist was here to examine George, and operate if there was any hope of success. Helen's fingers shook as she dressed hurriedly. The clock on her dresser gave the time as five-thirty.

"What will George think of it all?" Helen wondered. "Will he be afraid?"

SHE PAUSED for a brief, hopeless look at her mussed hair in the mirror and then let it go and hurried downstairs.

There was a tense half hour of being introduced to the doctor and his assistants, and of having breakfast with them. Alice, Helen could see, was even more tense than she.

When George appeared in the doorway of the breakfast room there was a split second of deep silence. George looked fearfully around, not sure whether to come in or turn and run. His eyes fell on Alice. He sidled over to her, his eyes warily on the newcomers.

Jerome brought in a plate of eggs and potatoes for George. He started eating. Helen could tell from the way Harvey and the doctor watched him eat that there was some drug in the food.

Her guess was right. A stretcher was brought in. The two interns expertly rolled George's inert body onto it and carried it out.

The doctor gave an audible sigh.

"Big lad," he said. "I'd hate to have had to give him a shot in the arm against his wishes."

The doctor then explained in a calm voice how it was necessary to inject an inert substance into the blood stream that would block the X-rays, so that the structure of the brain itself would show up in the pictures.

It was calm and cold like the advance descriptions of Research had been. Alice was crying.

One of the internes appeared in the doorway and nodded his head. The doctor stood up and went out.

"Like he was going out to take his turn at playing golf," Helen's thoughts whispered to her.

The nurses had disappeared without her seeing them go. There were only she and Alice and Harvey in the room. Harvey was smoking a cigaret. She had never seen him smoke before.

She had her arms around Alice. It was comforting to have something human to cling to for support. Alice

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had stopped crying. Harvey ground out the cigaret on a saucer and stood up. He looked at her briefly and turned away toward a window.

They waited. They had been waiting for three weeks. Helen realized that now. Nothing else had mattered, really; only that the doctor would come and take X-rays and decide whether he could operate or not, and whether it would do any good to operate.

Harvey, though she loved him, was not a genius or mastermind. His century and a half and more of life had brought him experience and good judgment not genius. She herself felt no wiser or stronger or more experienced than when she had really been twenty. She had a wealth of memories —nothing more.

The Society of Immortals belonged to George. It was his. Regardless of anything else it was his. In every part of it, it had been first a dream that existed in his own mind, a dream that he had brought into reality.

If he died now, or didn't recover his old self, and remained the village idiot...

Helen felt cold. She wanted to go over to Harvey now and look into his calm eyes and tell him she finally understood. She didn't. She didn't dare move. All she could do—all any of them could do, was wait.

The doctor appeared in the doorway with two dripping X-ray prints in his fingers. He went over to Harvey and held them up against the light.

Helen could see the dark spot from where she was sitting. The doctor's words meant little to her except—that they were going to operate at once.

"His head is being shaved. We can start operating in twenty minutes."

Helen saw Harvey nod his head and turn back to the window. The doctor dropped his hand on Harvey's shoulder briefly, then left the room.

She wanted to scream "NO! He might DIE!" But it would be better for Alice if he were dead, if living meant an eternity of being an uncomprehending, good natured human pet, no better than a dog that wags its tail and does simple tricks.

CHAPTER X

"WELCOME INTO our circle. I hope you plan on being with us a long time." George was standing once more in the doorway to his flat, a twinkle in his eye.

"So you're one of the so-called immortals. I must say you carry your age very well—about a hundred and forty-one?"

"Three." Helen's lips formed the word soundlessly and smiled.

"You don't look it." George stepped back into the room...

"But you love Harvey." George's kind, understanding smiled formed the words...

"I never went back." His smile was wistful. A pang of regret came.

"Maybe we should have taken him to visit his old home town before the operation," Helen thought to herself. She could see him, patiently docile, at the stoop of a back door in a small town, gratefully accepting a plate of food from some housewife. She could see him plodding down a small main street, little boys running after him and tormenting him.

"I learned to read and write from my landlady. She gave me a liking for good books and philosophy. She died, and rather than find another landlady I bought a railroad ticket and moved on."

A twisted smile on his kind, gentle face.

"From village idiot to riches—a success story."

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Helen felt a soft hand on her shoulder. She looked up, startled out of memories. It was Jerome, holding a cup of steaming coffee. She started to shake her head and changed her mind.

Harvey was drinking a cup. Helen looked across the room and smiled tremulously.

The coffee was strong and bitter. It was real. It brought her mind back to reality. Alice was drinking some too. Helen looked at her watch. Four hours had passed already!

Almost immediately the doctor came in. Jerome poured him a cup of the coffee. He gulped it down noisily and sighed loudly with satisfaction.

His eyes caught on the three tense faces turned on him.

"Relax," he said good-naturedly. "The worst is over."

"Will he be O.K.?" Harvey asked.

"Don't know yet," the doctor replied. "Can't tell until he regains consciousness."

"How soon can we see him?" Alice asked. Her voice was shrill.

"Well," the doctor looked at his watch. "He should be coming out of it in—"

Helen found herself holding her breath while she waited for him to say—

"About—twenty minutes or so," the doctor added. "But you can only see him for a minute. Don't hope for too much, and don't be alarmed if there doesn't seem to be any change. I removed the pressure spot, but I can't do more than that. Nature will decide the rest."

HARVEY was beside her now. His arm circled her shoulder. His other arm was around Alice's waist. He led them out of the breakfast room, across the expanse of the huge living room, and into the hospital room.

George's face looked pale and bloated. His head was encased in a turban of surgical gauze. A black thing was protruding from his mouth.

A nurse was standing over him, the two internes standing nearby. The other nurses were sterilizing strange, inhuman instruments and packing them into black cases.

The three moved softly across the room until they were a few feet from the hospital cot. Alice moaned in sympathy as the nurse took the black thing and twisted firmly, pulling it out of George's mouth.

"He'll be waking up in a minute or two," the doctor said just behind them.

Helen found herself holding her breath again. She let it out slowly. Her eyes looked up at Harvey. He was looking at George, expressionlessly. Suddenly his nostrils flared. Helen jerked her eyes back to the bed.

George's eyes were open. She felt them pause on her and moved on to Harvey. She saw them move on to Alice. Then they looked up at the ceiling. Nothing about him moved except his eyes.

They came back and settled on Harvey. They stayed there while an arm moved across the white cover and crept up to explore the bandaged head.

Everyone in the room was watching, waiting.

George suddenly seemed to become aware of the atmosphere of tenseness. His lips cracked into a weak smile.

Alice broke away from Harvey and dropped beside the bed, her body shaking with sobs as she buried her face in her arms.

"I must have been hurt pretty badly," George said. "You all act as if I didn't have a chance until now."

Helen found her head against Harvey's chest, tears of happiness

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flooding her eyes. George had spoken in his old, humorous tone. The idiot was gone. The poor, poor idiot. The lovable village idiot.

Helen took a grip on her emotions and turned to look at George again. His huge hand was stroking Alice's hair, his fingers idly tangling it and mussing it.

The doctor came to life and told them they would have to get out. They could come back tomorrow. He pushed them gently until he had them at the door. Then he went over and took Alice's shoulders and gently lifted her to her feet.

Her hand went out. George took it and let it slip through his fingers. Helen put her arm around Alice and led her from the room.

THERE followed days and weeks of slow recuperation. The doctor, despite his first determination not to come down again unless George had a setback, paid frequent visits. The trim nurses stayed on, working three eight hour shifts. One of them was always near, her practiced eye watching for signs of fatigue or mental strain.

Alice was again taking George for walks on the beach while Helen and Harvey sat on the porch and watched them; but now it was George who did the leading, and George who taught Alice the finer points of digging for clams.

Now and then Helen caught Harvey's eyes on the nurses, restless. She sensed that he was impatiently waiting until the day they pronounced George completely on the road to recovery, and left.

That day eventually came. The four of them, Helen, Alice, Harvey, and George, stood side by side and waved a last farewell to the doctor and the nurses as their car moved down the driveway and into the country road.

It was George who turned and said, "And now, Harvey. Out with it. Where are we? What's happened?"

Briefly Harvey explained all that had happened. He gave a bare outline first. The explosion, the trip to the coast, the weeks of waiting for the doctor to come. He told of the destruction of Research and the killing of most of the immortals.

George listened. There was a light in his eyes that Helen hadn't seen there before. He was no longer the indolent, joking host at the third floor flat in the brownstone house. His questions were to the point. His mind was alert and quick to seize on a point.

He had Helen repeat her nightmare several times and patiently questioned her on parts of it, trying to help her remember unimportant things she might have forgotten. He questioned Alice on when she had first noticed Helen's disturbed sleep, when the storm had started, and how Helen behaved after she awakened.

It had been early noon when he began his questioning. The sun had set when he finally relaxed and became silent. He sat on one of the stone steps of the lodge, his eyes looking to the west across the flat expanse of the ocean.

"So," he said softly. "So."

"What do you mean, 'so'?" Harvey asked with a short laugh.

"I mean simply this," George said in a flat voice. "All that I've learned adds up to only one thing. Alex Potocki finally found the thing that causes immortality."

"But that's absurd!" Helen found herself saying.

"No," George said firmly. "It HAS to be it. Otherwise the destruction of Research and all its scientists is an insane act—no matter WHO did it."

"But was it Alex?" Helen said weakly.

"I don't think so," George said.

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"What!" It was Harvey's turn to be surprised. "But it has to be Alex! If it wasn't—if he was not planning to get rid of us all and be the only immortal on Earth, he would have come rushing to you the minute he was sure he had found it and told you!"

GEORGE shook his head. "You forget all the times it seemed he had the right answer."

"That's right," Harvey said. "The first time was five years ago when he thought that anti-EC1O factor was it. It might have been, too, except that it set up a manic imbalance in the endocrines. I see what you mean. Alex would probably have waited to make sure before jumping to conclusions again. But how do you know he didn't make sure? The right substance might have been found months ago, and he might have just made certain of it before the 'accident'."

"The reason I don't think it was Alex is contained in Helen's nightmare," George answered. "One thing both of you missed in that nightmare is the roll the emotions play in such a dream. In a woman especially the emotions play a more important part than logic. A picture painted by the subconscious of a woman is still painted to her satisfaction. It may be a nightmare, but her protective instinct is working in it."

"What do you mean?" Helen asked. She felt her body unaccountably trembling.

"Well," George said. "Take the roll Agnes played, for example. She had a branding iron. She was trying to brand you, but never succeeded. Why the branding iron? Why not a dagger or a gun?"

"I—I don't know why," Helen said quietly.

"I think I know why," George said. "But let's skip that for the moment. Why did Alex, who was supposedly trying to help you, change into Agnes with the branding iron?"

"Because her mind was trying to tell her Alex was a threat equal to that from Agnes," Harvey spoke up.

"Not necessarily," George said. "Remember, Agnes was her daughter."

"You mean that Alex was my son?" Helen said incredulously. "That's absurd! I had a son by my second marriage. That's true. But he didn't look anything like Alex!"

"Tell us about him," George said quietly.

Helen was silent for a while. Her eyes took on a faraway look. She began talking so softly it was difficult to hear her.

"I met Arthur McCalmont in Spokane Washington in 1914. He was a mining engineer. He didn't want to marry me because he was so much 'older' than I was. He was forty-five, and I had told him I was twenty-three. It took a year for him to make up his mind. In 1915 we were married. We had a daughter in 1916. Then when we went into the war against Germany he joined the army. He left before our son was born.

"Tom McCalmont, our son, was born in March, 1918. Two weeks after his birth the War Department informed me that Arthur had been killed. Our daughter died during the flu epidemic after the war. I raised Tom alone. When he reached the age of fifteen I sent him to a private school, gave up my home in Spokane, and came east, settling in Dubuque, where I met Carl. That was in 1934. After that I went west every year for a short visit with Tom until he finished school. The last two years before he graduated I began to notice that peculiar, analytical gaze that I learned to recognize meant that my children were wondering why I didn't grow old.

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"After he graduated he dropped out of sight. Although I tried to find him, he left no forwarding address at the school."

"What was Tom like?" George said. "Tall? Dark? Smart?"

"He was short," Helen said. "About five feet six inches. His hair was jet black. Although his grades in school were only average he had the most inflexible will I've ever known. I never knew him to give up on anything. When he was about seven years old there was another boy in the neighborhood that licked him in a fight. He came home with a bruise on his face and a bloody nose. About once a week after that for several months he came home beaten up. He picked the fights himself. Then one day he came home even more bruised than any time before, but that time he wasn't crying. He had licked the other boy."

"I see," George said. "And you say he simply dropped out of sight?"

"YES," Helen said. "I had maintained a mailing address in Chicago where he wrote me. I never told him I had married again. There was no way he could have found me, and when I couldn't find him I still kept that mailing address in case he ever decided to write. I still have it."

"Let's see," Harvey said. "He would be fifty-six now, wouldn't he?"

"Yes," Helen answered.

"Five foot six," George mused. "Jet black hair that would be turning grey now. Bulldog character—except that he wondered what made his mother stay young and apparently didn't follow up."

"He could have changed his name," Alice suggested.

"Yes," George said. "And come to Chicago and discovered that the address where he wrote to his mother was just a mailing address. He could even have found out where she lived and gone to Dubuque and discovered she had married again. He could have looked up the marriage records and found she gave her age as twenty. He could have kept track of her all the time, and when Helen came into our society he could have been hiring detectives to follow her and found out about us."

"And since she associated him with Alex Potocki as a self deception in her dream in one instance she could have in the other," Harvey said.

"Yes," George took up the line of speculation. "She undoubtedly noticed the two young men of the dream following her quite often, without consciously being aware of it—or maybe they were just symbolism. At any rate, the Alex Potocki in the back seat of the car now reduces to her son, Tom McCalmont, being the man behind the two young men."

"Probably her son's disappearance bothered her," Alice spoke up. "It went into her subconscious as a problem to be solved. Her subconscious took all the factors of his character and worked out a solution something like the one we are getting now. Since her conscious mind refused to listen, it came out in the nightmare."

"It's beginning to look like all your troubles began the day you found me," Helen said, crestfallen. "My children seem to be at the root of everything."

"That's something we can't be sure of," George said. "Even if it's true it isn't your fault, and anyway the damage is already done. What we've got to do now is locate Tom and go on from there."

"Do you have a picture of Tom?" Harvey asked.

"Yes. In a trunk I have in storage in Dubuque," Helen answered.

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"I don't think we'll need it," George said. "Tomorrow morning Harvey can run over to Olympia with me and we'll pick up a picture. Unless I'm very much mistaken it will be a picture of your son Tom."

"Then he's in Olympia?" Helen asked.

"No," George replied. "I'll get it in the newspaper office. I won't tell you any more about it now. It'll be a picture of him the way he looks now, but if he's your son you'll be able to recognize him at once."

George took Alice's hand and stood up. Soon they were walking down the beach.

"I can't get over it," Helen said after a long silence. "George looks at something we've all been looking at without getting anywhere, and somehow it all seems clear to him. I can see where he is right about the dream. Tom had little resemblance to Alex. No one would ever connect them in any way. Yet I can see why my mind used Alex as a disguise for Tom. They are both short. They both have black hair. But, more important, they both have the same driving force that won't back down. Alex built up Research. Tom would never admit defeat at anything he set his mind to."

CHAPTER XI

HARVEY parked the car as close to the newspaper office as he could. They had a half block walk.

"Who're we going to look for," he asked as they walked toward the newspaper office.

"We want to get a picture of Cooger, the gang boss of Chicago," George said, lighting the pipe he had bought on their way into town.

"Cooger?" Harvey exclaimed. "I never thought of him."

"I did," George said. "His name popped into my mind from the start, when I came back to life and found out all that had happened. Wait a minute. Here's a newsboy. Maybe his picture is in today's paper. You never know."

He fished a quarter out of his pocket and exchanged it for the paper. He and Harvey kept walking while he opened the front page up so they could look at it.

They stopped dead in their tracks. Staring at them from the center of the front page were two large faces. They were George and Helen!

The account underneath the pictures stated that they were identified at the scene of the explosion of the three story brownstone, and that new evidence linked them with other explosions and with an international spy ring. There was ten thousand dollars reward for information leading to their capture.

"You'd better get back in the car," Harvey said. "I'll get the picture of Cooger as quick as I can."

"Right," George said. He held the paper up to partly conceal his features and yet appear to be just reading it, and went back to the car. Twenty minutes later Harvey rejoined him.

They drove in silence back to the lodge house. When they arrived the girls ran out to meet them. George thrust the picture of Cooger in front of Helen.

"Is that your son?" he asked tensely.

"He's Phil Cooger, the big boss in Illinois," George said bluntly. "Now look at this." He handed her the newspaper.

She read it with Alice looking over her shoulder. The two men stood silently until the girls had finished reading.

"Now we know what we're up against," George said bitterly. "Cooger is known to have the whole state

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of Illinois sewed up tight. A politician can't run for office without an O.K. from him. A pick pocket can't even steal a wallet without getting an O.K. from Phil Cooger. If we're found we'll be taken back to Illinois, and we wouldn't stand a chance."

"But we won't be found here, George," Alice said.

"Oh, no?" George gritted. "The doctor and nurses that were here are probably looking at those pictures right now and thinking of that reward. THEY know we're here."

"You mean we have to leave?" Alice asked plaintively.

"I don't know," George said. "We don't dare do much travelling. We'd be picked up in a hurry that way. We've got to plan carefully."

"Jerome and his wife are safe," Harvey said. "The reward wouldn't tempt them. In fact, there's always a lot more than ten thousand in cash here they could help themselves to if they wanted it. I built up a reserve fund just in case of trouble."

"Maybe we could figure out some sort of hiding place in case the police show up," George said thoughtfully. "Helen and I could hide then, and you could say we had gone on someplace."

"As far as that goes," Alice said. "We could all take a long trip in the big boat and Jerome could say we saw the newspapers and left."

George shook his head.

"Somehow I don't think any of those things would work," he said. "If the doctor notifies Illinois where we are, and it's really Cooger behind it, he'll send some very smart boys out here and see through all those things. If we hid, probably the first thing he would do is look up the ownership of this house and have his men camp here indefinitely. Sooner or later that would smoke us out of hiding. If we took the boat we'd be in the same fix. It can't carry enough fuel to go to Mexico or South America."

THE FOUR had drifted over to the front steps of the lodge while they were talking. George sat down on the lowest step.

"Anyway," he continued. "All those schemes can do if they succeed is just keep us from being caught and probably killed as soon as we're back in Illinois where Cooger can do as he pleases. We've got to do more than that or we'll have to keep hiding forever, which is an impossibility if he really wants us out of the way badly enough.

"What we have to do," he said slowly. "Is go after HIM. He has the secret of immortality and intends to keep it secret, or he wouldn't be going to so much trouble to kill all the immortals. We have to get him and get that secret out of him."

"That means going back to Chicago," Harvey said.

"Or laying a trap for him here," Alice added.

"I think you have something, Alice," George said. "If we could catch him here we would stand more of a chance."

"I want to ask something," Helen said. "Why, if you plan on giving the secret to all mankind, do you still insist on secrecy?"

"Huh?" George exclaimed in surprise.

"Why do you still insist on secrecy?" Helen demanded. "There was a good reason when Research was still going. Now that we are the only four immortals left, so far as we know; why can't we let the world know all about it?"

George stared at her, a peculiar expression on his face. Harvey was doing the same. Then they looked at

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each other and grinned sheepishly.

"Looks like we've been shown up," George said.

"You mean I've DONE it?" Helen exclaimed. "Glory be!"

"First we have to get a controlling interest in some large newspaper," Harvey said after the laughing quieted down.

"First we have to make sure we don't get caught," George countered. "We've got to do that now. If the doctor notifies the Seattle police they'll wire Chicago right away. Before the day's over the place might be swarming with police or Chicago gangsters!"

"We're right back where we started then," Alice said.

"Not quite," George said confidently. "The Quinalt Reservation is only twenty miles north of here. Harvey can go to Seattle or Portland and see about buying a newspaper. We three can take the car and drive up there for a vacation. We can take enough food along and while you two squaws keep camp I can write up the whole story and hit the world right between the eyes with it. Publicity will be the only thing to fight Cooger with!"

"Alice can drive down to Moclips once a week," Harvey added. "As soon as I get a newspaper lined up I'll let you know by writing her there, general delivery."

"Good," George said. "Now let's get busy. We'd better take the car you bought in Dubuque so it isn't around. You can have Jerome drive you to Olympia and catch a train, and buy a car later."

"One more thing," Harvey said. "I believe in playing every angle. You may have to get out of the reservation. Besides writing a letter I'll put an ad in the papers. Let's see. I'll make it read like this: 'Joe, come home. All is forgiven.' Then I'll give the address with the street number as initials, implying a name. For example, 1342 would be M.D.B., I think. What'll I do about the name of the street though?"

"Just sign it M.D.B.," George suggested. "Put another ad in the same paper offering a saxaphone for sale for six hundred dollars or some other outlandish figure so no one will want to buy it, and give your right address there. That way, when we see the other ad we can look the address up in musical instruments for sale."

"Good idea," Harvey said. "Let's call Jerome and let him in on it." He turned and ran up the steps.

TWO HOURS later the long sleek Rummery sedan was ready. Helen's lips trembled as she kissed Harvey good bye. He stood in the driveway waving at them until they were out of sight. Not until then did he turn back into the house.

"I've never told you, Jerome," he said. "This house is in your name. I want you to go to the bank in Olympia and borrow all you can get on it. I'll take all the cash we have here except five thousand. That will be enough to make sure you have everything you need for the next year."

"Yes, sir," Jerome said. "Are you sure you'll be all right?"

"I'll be all right," Harvey said, laying a hand affectionately on Jerome's shoulder. "I only hope you will be. You might be having some trouble before the day's over. But get this straight. If anyone comes, tell them you own the place. That's true, legally. They will check on it. Tell them we were just paying guests with plenty of money. You don't know who we are. We left in a hurry and didn't say where we were going."

"Where will I send the money I borrow?" Jerome asked.

"Have a cashier's check made out to Harvey Spelger and send it to

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general delivery in Portland," Harvey replied. "And get it as soon as possible. We're going to have to work fast."

Less than an hour later Jerome and Harvey followed the path the Rummery had taken across the scab rock meadow land to the county road. They turned east toward Olympia.

They didn't see the sleek jet two seater that dropped down from the stratosphere over the lodge and followed their dust trail until the pilot could make out their license number. It turned up into a vertical climb and in five seconds was out of sight.

CHATER XII

"WELL, my boy," the majestic appearing old editor said condescendingly. "I admire your ambition to own a newspaper. But unfortunately the controlling stock in this one is owned by the Syndicate."

"But on your masthead it says this is the only locally owned newspaper in Portland!" Harvey objected.

"I know, I know," the editor said, waving his cigar expansively. "The truth of the matter is that I DO own some stock in it—or I wouldn't be the editor. But I venture to say there isn't a privately owned paper in the United States or Canada. It isn't on the books, mind you, and if you repeat what I'm telling you I'll have to call you a downright liar. You can't buy a single share in this newspaper without the O. K. of the controlling interests. If I wanted to sell you MY shares, for example, which I don't, I would have to write in and get permission, and more than likely they would snap them up and not let them go to a stranger."

"Where could I contact the ones that have to O. K. it?" Harvey asked.

"You might try—no. You'd just get the runaround," the editor said. "I'll tell you what. I like you. You're a rich young man looking for some place to put his money to work. Try Phil Cooger in Chicago. I think he's president of the Syndicate that owns this paper. If he isn't he might as well be. If he likes you, you're in. Whether you have enough money or not he'll get you your paper and give you a chance to be an editor."

Harvey left the newspaper building feeling very dejected. In only three days he had learned that the press was not for sale at any price anywhere. He could probably buy a small town weekly, but what good would that do?

He dropped into a cafe and bought lunch and mulled over the angles to a small town weekly. The more he thought about it the more possible it seemed. He could print several million copies and mail them all over the country. In that way the public would learn of the immortals and of the hold Phil Cooger had gained on the press.

He left his lunch unfinished and went out to his car. An hour and a half later he drew up in front of the Kelso Sentinal in Kelso, Washington.

"Why yes," the stooped, bald headed owner said delightedly. "I'd be glad to sell out. We can go across the street to the bank and I'll sign the deed and turn the mortgage over to you right now."

"How much paper do you have on hand?" Harvey asked, casting a proprietary eye over the flatbed presses.

"Enough for the next two weeks' issue," the old man said. "You don't need to worry about paper though. You see, the newsprint syndicate issues us our paper on a prorated basis so that we get enough to print ten percent over our current subscription figure. It comes up once a month from Portland. The next shipment will be here next week sometime."

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"But suppose you want to expand and print a few thousand extra copies?" Harvey asked with a sinking feeling.

"Can't get paper for that," the old man said positively. "I tried it five years ago. Had a little ambition then and wanted to take in surrounding towns. The Syndicate turned me down flat. Yes, sir!"

"What's your production now?" Harvey clutched at a last straw.

"Four hundred and thirty-three," was the reply.

HARVEY turned away and went out the door to his car. He had to admit defeat. The only other thing, radio, was out too. He hadn't tried that for the simple reason that he had known all about it ahead of time from a big fuss about it in the press a few years before.

He started to get in his car, then realized he hadn't finished his lunch. There was a small lunch room across the street. As he looked he noticed a face staring out at him. When it saw him looking it turned away hastily. There were two men sitting together.

Was he being followed? The face had been completely unfamiliar, yet he knew that in a good job of following a person the faces changed often, to be replaced by others.

There was only one way to find out. He dropped behind the wheel and started the motor. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the two men in the lunch room get up and walk casually to the door.

Harvey released the hand brake and stepped on the gas. In the rear view mirror he saw the two men run to a car and start after him.

He slowed down, ready to speed up if they seemed intent on catching him. Their car showed no indication of closing the gap. It was apparent that they had orders only to follow him, not capture him.

That could mean only one thing. They hoped that eventually he would lead them to George and Helen. Evidently they didn't know yet where the others were.

The highway had several turns ahead. He knew that from his trip down on the bus. Should he try taking a side road?

He lowered the door window and looked up. A small plane was cruising overhead. He pulled his head back in and looked in the rear view mirror. The other car was half a mile back.

The first bend in the road approached. He rounded it and, on the spur of the moment, pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. He waited five minutes. The other car didn't come.

That settled it. The plane and the car were both following him. The plane had signalled that he had stopped. Undoubtedly the other car had stopped also.

If he took a side road the plane could follow him and signal the car where to go. He started up again. So far he had done nothing that would positively indicate he knew he was being followed. It would be better that way.

As his car ate up mile after mile he pondered the problem. He couldn't go back to the lodge or, least of all, go to the Indian Reservation and find George and the girls. That was what they were holding back for. If they thought he wouldn't lead them to the others they would probably kill him instead of wasting so much energy following him.

And yet, he had to get to the others. Probably there was a systematic hunt going on. They probably wouldn't know about Alice. She had just arrived in Chicago the day of the flight. She would be safe enough going to the post office at

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Moclips.

He reached Olympia without coming to any decision. He passed the intersection with the coast road and kept on through the city toward Tacoma. At Tacoma he decided there was nothing to be done except drive on to Seattle.

The other car was no longer behind him. The plane that had followed him from Kelso was gone and there were now three other small ones cruising aimlessly overhead, any one of which, or all, might be following him.

There might even be some sort of invisible mark on his car so they could follow it unerringly through traffic. It was hopeless.

THEY probably knew the purpose of his trip to Portland by now. They had probably reported back to Cooger and he knew they were planning on publicity to fight him. He would most certainly plug any holes left in that sector.

Publicity was already an impossibility. There would have to be some other way. There WAS no other way. Phil Cooger held all the cards. The Press, the Radio, law enforcement agencies—all were under his thumb. It would be impossible to even get to him and kill him.

Cooger had gained all this power in one short lifetime. Immortal, he would eventually rule the world. Against him stood only four people, immortal, but only so long as they managed to evade the highly perfected police system that had been designed to track down more experienced prey than they.

Harvey slowed down as his car met the street traffic of Seattle. Around him people walked and rode, free to do as they chose—so long as they weren't a threat to Phil Cooger. They would think him insane if he stopped his car and started to tell them the truth. They would laugh at him if he told them he had been born a century and a half ago.

And still no plan had come to him. Around him, unseen, were new faces watching him. It would be no use to single them out. They would be replaced before he could be sure. If he did anything it would have to be by some system dead reckoning to eliminate ALL pursuit, regardless of what it might be. When he made his move it would have to succeed the first time. Once they found out he was aware of being followed they would take him.

First, he decided, he would check in at a hotel. He turned up to Fourth Avenue to the New Seattle Hotel. He turned his car into the street level elevator and stepped out. The doorman recognized him.

"Hello, Mr. Trent," he said warmly. Harvey gave him a smile and walked through the door into the lobby. At the desk he signed his name to the card the clerk laid in front of him and followed the bell hop to the elevator. His eyes took in the three men who entered the lobby. When the elevator doors closed one of them was crossing toward the room clerk's desk. He had never seen any of them before.

His room overlooked the Sound. It was a nice one with a modern television-radio-phonograph and expensive furniture. He took off his coat and shirt and took his electric razor out of his bag.

There was a knock on the door.

He stopped the razor and looked at the door, and licked his dry lips. It was beginning to get him.

The knock was repeated. He went over and opened the door. A bell hop, a different one than had brought his bags, asked him if there was anything he wanted.

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"No, I guess not," Harvey replied. He fished out a dime and gave it to the boy with a wry smile. "That's all the change I have on me."

HE CLOSED the door and started to shave again, knowing that the boy was probably telling some man what he had seen.

The phone rang. It was the desk clerk.

"Is everything satisfactory, Mr. Trent?" he asked.

"Quite all right, thank you," Harvey replied.

"Is there anything we can do for you?" the room clerk persisted. "Are you expecting any guests? Is anyone waiting for you perhaps? That we can page?"

"No. No one," Harvey said. "I'll tell you what, though." He had been about to hang up when a thought struck him. He debated hastily.

"Yes?" the clerk's voice came politely.

Harvey knew there was probably someone standing beside the clerk listening over another phone.

"What time is it now?" he stalled.

"It's four-twenty-three," the clerk said precisely.

"Good," Harvey said. "What time is dinner served in the dining room?"

"At five-thirty, Mr. Trent," came the respectful answer.

Harvey grinned to himself.

"Good," Harvey repeated. "I'll just have time. Have my car brought back up at once. I'll just have time to run an errand before dinner." He dropped the phone back on its hook.

There was an expression of elation on his face now. An afterthought made him turn back to the phone.

"Give me the flower shop," he said to the switchboard operator. He ordered a dozen roses placed in his car.

"That should do it," he muttered as he hung up. "It was so obvious, so simple, that I never thought of it!"

Ten minutes later with a clean shirt on after his shave he stepped out of the elevator and crossed the lobby to the car exit. His car was waiting and the box of roses was on the seat.

CHAPTER XIII

HARVEY glanced at the girl at the reception desk and a look of disappointment appeared on his face. She glanced up and then looked back at the book she was reading when she saw him continue on toward the elevator.

"Third floor," he said to the seventeen year old boy running the elevator. He turned and looked back toward the entrance in time to see a man coming through.

When the doors opened on the third floor he stepped into the hall. His eyes lit up with satisfaction. The nurse was just what he wanted. She wore a white Sister's uniform. He smiled at her.

"Visiting hours are over until this evening," the sister said, returning his smile.

Harvey ignored this. He laid his box of roses on the desk so that they were in front of the nurse. She looked down. Her eyes fixed on some writing on the box. The writing was on a slip of paper held in place under the wrapping string.

"Do you," the paper read, "Know of, or have you ever heard of Alice Heeb?"

Out of the corner of his eye Harvey saw the door to the stairway open slightly. If the sister said the wrong thing now it would be the end.

"I hope you can make an exception to the rule this time," Harvey said hastily. "I may not have a chance to visit her again. I'm leaving town tonight."

The sister frowned over this ap-

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parently inconsistent behavior. Then she smiled.

"I think we can," she said. "But you can only stay a few minutes."

As she stood up she looked at the lapel emblem on Harvey's coat. When she started down the corridor ahead of him her elbow moved in a way that told Harvey she was crossing herself.

"She's heard of Alice Heeb," he said triumphantly to himself.

In the hotel room he had suddenly recalled what Alice had said about being a Catholic.

"Wherever I go," she had said, "they know of me."

The sister paused at a door.

"You wait here," she said clearly. "I'll see if she's awake."

She opened the door and went in, closing it behind her. Harvey waited outside. He heard the soft murmur of voices in the room.

The door opened and the sister came out.

"All right, you may go in now," she said. "Don't stay more than ten minutes though, and if you want me I'll be at my desk."

Harvey stepped through the door, not knowing what to expect. The sister closed it firmly from the other side.

Another sister stood beside a hospital cot. On the cot was an incredibly wrinkled face, the eyes closed.

"I'm sister Lenora," the nurse said. "Sister Amelia said something about an emergency, and for me to listen to what you say very carefully. She said to tell you she will keep whoever is on the stairs from coming down the hall."

"Perfect," Harvey murmured. "I'd never hoped for such understanding co-operation. You've heard of Alice Heeb?"

Sister Lenora nodded without speaking.

HARVEY lifted his hand to his lapel and fingered his emblem.

"I've heard of that also," she smiled.

"Do you think it's good?" Harvey asked.

"Alice Heeb is good," Sister Lenora replied enigmatically. She took the box of roses from Harvey and laid them on a table, taking the slip of paper and hiding it in her robe.

"Mrs. O'Hara," she nodded toward the old woman on the cot, "is under an opiate."

"I have to trust you completely," Harvey said. "I haven't time to do anything else."

Quickly he told her of the men following him and of Alice, George, and Helen, hiding in the Indian Reservation. He outlined quickly the extent of organization controlled by Phil Cooger.

When he finished sister Lenora remained silent for a minute.

"Where are you staying?" she asked suddenly. Harvey told her.

"You may go back to your hotel now," she said. "And I'd suggest that tomorrow you try to buy a newspaper here in Seattle."

"But, but," Harvey sputtered.

"Don't forget," Sister Lenora said with a humorous twinkle in her eyes. "You just visited Mrs. O'Hara, the widow of George O'Hara, who has no close relatives and is an old friend of yours who," she glanced pityingly at the aged form on the bed, "will probably not last out the night."

She led Harvey to the door and opened it for him.

"Thank you for being so thoughtful as to bring her the flowers," she said wistfully. "God bless you Mr. Trent."

Harvey drove back to the hotel feeling a little bewildered. The two Sisters had acted with keen and swift understanding of the situation thrust in their faces without advance no-

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tice. Sister Amelia had noticed the eavesdropper at the stair door without giving any visible indication.

Sister Lenora had grasped the situation he had sketched so briefly and decided in her own mind on a course of action. She had told him nothing, except to make sure he knew whom he had been calling on, and to advise him to carry on his futile attempt to buy a newspaper. That, obviously, was to give the enemy the idea he hadn't given up yet. A good idea. They would be content to leave him alone for another day or two. In that time maybe these new allies could cook up something.

When he stepped out of his car at the hotel he looked at his watch. It was five-thirty on the dot. In the lobby he caught the room clerk's eye, glanced up at the clock and back to the clerk, nodded and smiled, and went into the dining room.

HE WAS on his dessert when he heard himself being paged. The boy saw his signal and came over to tell him he was wanted on the phone. He rose and followed the boy to a bank of phone booths in the lobby.

"This is sister Anna," the voice at the other end announced. "Sister Lenora has told me that Mrs. O'Hara is not expected to live, and that you are the only friend she has in the world. I must ask you to forgive me for calling at this hour, but the sister also informed me you were planning on leaving the city immediately."

"Well, I was," Harvey said. "But I've changed my mind. I'll be here another two days, anyway."

"Fine," sister Anna's voice came. "The reason I called is that Mrs. O'Hara is a charity case. If you would be interested in seeing her funeral arrangements taken care of I'm sure her prayers would be with you. Would you care to do that?"

"Why yes," Harvey said. "I guess so. Why, of course! I'd be glad to."

"Perhaps you could drop into the hospital tomorrow morning," the sister suggested. "We can make all arrangements for the burial then. Would that be suitable?"

"Yes," Harvey said. "Tomorrow morning."

He heard a click at the other end. He smiled to himself and added for the benefit of whoever was listening in, "Money grabbers." Then he went back to his table and ordered fresh coffee.

* * *

"Sister Anna?" Harvey asked the girl at the reception desk. The ancient wall clock behind her said five after nine.

"Straight down the hall, third door on the right," she said.

Harvey followed her directions, knocking softly at the door. It was opened by a sister wearing a black robe. Inside were sisters Lenora and Amelia, an older sister who was obviously, by the process of elimination, sister Anna, and three priests. They introduced themselves gravely. The three priests were Fathers Blent, Harris, and Reed.

"It will probably surprise you," Father Blent said. "But by now your friends are on their way to a place of refuge. We've been working all night. But we're stumped when we try to think what to do with you."

"That's stumped me too," Harvey said wryly. "It's impossible to shake free of those men who follow me all over, and I can't even know who they are. They change so often."

"Every minute endangers your life," father Blent said. "If you go back to your car now it might be that they would get orders to kill you before you reached the hotel. Therefore there is no course for us but to spirit you off now, and hope that Mr. Coo-

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ger won't dare to attack us."

"He wouldn't dare," Harvey said. "After all, there's public opinion."

"Not for the the last ten years," Father Blent said. "This entire hospital could be blown out of existence and it wouldn't get in the local papers unless Mr. Cooger's organization permitted it. So we're running considerable risk in helping you."

"I see," Harvey said slowly. "In that case, forget about me. If George and the two girls are safe...I've lived long enough anyway—and thanks."

He turned to go.

"Just a minute," Sister Lenora spoke up. "You don't understand. We can't let you go to your death."

Harvey turned back.

"If there were only some way you could vanish without them connecting it with us!" Sister Lenora continued.

"Every step I take is watched," Harvey said. "And I'm afraid to look in the trunk compartment of my car."

"Could you hire a taxi and slip out in the thick of traffic?" Father Blent asked. "Or would the taxi driver be one of them?"

"He'd probably be one of them," Harvey said. "But even if he weren't, before I'd go a block they would discover I wasn't in the cab. The police radio would broadcast an alarm. Every police call box would start ringing. I don't stand a chance."

"Maybe we could follow and pick you up," Father Blent suggested.

"If I got away I might just as well have stayed here," Harvey replied. "The minute they're sure I'm definitely gone they'll backtrack to this place and it'll amount to the same thing as if I'd stayed."

"I was afraid it would add up that way," Sister Anna sighed. "Well, let's go ahead with our original plan then. It may mean trouble but we'll have to face it."

THE SISTERS turned their backs. The priest that had been introduced as Father Reed started to take off his habit.

"You're to change clothes with Father Reed," Father Blent said.

With a glance at the backs of the nuns Harvey took off his suit, shirt, and tie. He slipped into the priest's clothes. Father Reed looked surprisingly like him when he had finished.

"Now what?" Harvey asked.

"Come here," Sister Anna ordered. She pointed to a chair. Harvey sat down obediently. Thin aluminum forms were slipped into his nostrils. Hands rubbed a white cream over his face and hands.

At the same time Father Reed, in his clothes, was rubbing a dark face powder over the exposed parts of his skin.

"Now for an ugly wart," Sister Anna said with a satisfied grunt. "There's nothing like an ugly wart to hide a person's face."

She stepped back to inspect her handiwork.

Sister Lenora handed him a small mirror. He looked in it and whistled. He could see not the slightest resemblance to his own features in the mirror.

"You know what to do?" Sister Anna said to Father Reed.

"Yes," he replied. "There's a man waiting just outside the front door where he can look down the hall. I'm to step out as if I were planning on leaving. Then I'm to look alarmed and turn in the other direction. I run down the back stairs to the furnace room, taking off these clothes as quickly as possible. In the furnace room is another uniform I'm to put on. The powder washes off easily. If the reactions of the pursuers are right I should meet them on my way

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up the stairs again. I'm to say that I saw a man slip out the powerhouse door."

"Only if the engineer informs you no one is spying on the back door," Sister Anna said reprovingly. "If someone *is*, then you have seen nobody."

"What am I to do?" Harvey asked.

"You just stay here," Sister Anna said. "And keep you mouth shut." A nervous smile flashed momentarily on her plain but character molded face. "Be careful, Father Reed," she said softly to that man as he paused at the door and took a last look at those in the room.

He nodded briefly and opened the door. His eyes took in the man at the head of the hall in swift analysis, then turned in apparent hesitation. He had his act well in mind. Two slow, hesitating steps forward, then the swift glance at the man again, followed by a look of alarm, a swift turn, and a dash toward the rear of the building. He would have a hundred foot start on the waiting man.

With a silent prayer he went through his act. As he turned and started walking swiftly he heard a shout behind him. He burst into a run as he heard the sounds of pounding heels behind him. He reached the door to the basement.

Something hot touched his shoulder blade. A sharp bark hit his eardrums immediately after. The door was open now. He plunged through onto the stairs. His feet should have taken the steps with ease. It felt strange to give the mental orders and feel that they went through, and then have his legs disobey him.

He saw the steps rushing toward his face and put up his hands to protect it. As he hit, he was conscious of the numb feeling from his chest down. It was as if his whole body had suddenly gone to sleep.

From some impersonal, logical well of the subconscious the knowledge emerged that a bullet had broken his spine and crushed all the nerves that controlled his body from the heart down.

Some will other than his own seemed to take control of his arms and force them to drag his body down the steps into the basement.

He heard a muffled roar and a whine of a bullet smashing the lock on the basement door. Footsteps sounded behind him, coming down the stairs toward him. He kept his face down, trying to hide his identity as long as possible. His arms kept reaching forward and grasping the edge of the next step and pulling his dead body downward.

The steps behind him stopped. The silence was ominous. He never heard the shot that entered the back of his neck and tore out a large part of his face.

"NOW DON'T be alarmed, lady," the man said to Sister Anna, closing the basement door and standing with his back to it to prevent her from going past him. "He was a very dangerous criminal we were after. I recognized him as he came in the hospital and waited for him. He tried to escape and I shot him in the line of duty."

He pulled out a billfold and showed her police credentials. Sister Anna looked at them numbly, nodding her head.

"That's better," he said sympathetically. "Now just go back in your office with me while I phone. O.K.?"

Sister Anna turned obediently and walked back to her office with bowed head. The officer followed her through the door.

"Well! Quite a gathering!" he exclaimed as he saw the others. His eyes rested briefly on each face. Har-

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vey held his breath as they touched on him, and expelled it slowly as they passed on.

"One of you better go stand guard over the body of the man on the basement stairs while I phone," he said curtly. "The rest of you better stay here."

Harvey looked at the grief stricken faces around him and muttered, "I'll go." He left the room before anyone could object.

On the basement stairs he stopped beside the still form that wore his suit. A dark stain had spread over the back of the coat. There was a dark hole at the base of the skull.

He took the head carefully by the hair and lifted it until he could see the face. A high powered dum-dum must have been used. When Harvey saw what it had done a bitterness chilled him. He was safe now. But at a terrible price. The police would never be able to find out they had shot the wrong man.

Fifteen minutes later the body was lifted into a basket and carried out of the hospital to a waiting police ambulance to be hauled to the morgue. The look in the eyes of the priests and nuns tore at Harvey's heart.

Sister Anna, her eyes dull and lifeless, answered the officer's questions, answered his remarks, and served as spokesman for the rest of them.

When the police left she turned to Harvey.

"You had better go now," she said. "There's a car and driver waiting for you in the hospital garage that will take you to your friends."

The lids dropped to hide the grief in her eyes. She turned her back to him.

Sister Lenora looked at him pleadingly with bright eyes, brimming with tears.

"Good-bye," she formed the word soundlessly with her lips, her face a pale mash.

Tere was nothing he could say. He turned and left.

"MIGHT as well relax, father," the chauffeur said as the car crossed the floating bridge to Mercer Island. "It will take a good three hours to cover the four hundred and fifty miles to that spot where you're going."

Harvey closed his eyes. The sight of the face of the dead priest on the stairway rose before him. He opened his eyes quickly. He kept them open for the whole trip.

The car kept to the transcontinental highway through the states of Washington and Idaho. In Montana it turned off onto a state highway, and finally onto a dirt road. The dirt road passed through a small town after a few miles. There was only a store or two and a few houses, all badly in need of a visit from a paint salesman.

It passed through the town and wound in and out through densely wooded, rolling country. There were bad places in the road where spring rains had washed it away and summer winds had tried to fill it in again.

"About all this place is good for is a summer retreat of you fathers who need a vacation," the chauffeur spoke up politely. "Good fishing in the stream, they tell me. Too bad I have to get back to Seattle today. Wouldn't mind staying here a few days myself."

The car turned off the dirt road into a better preserved pair of worn ruts in the woods. This went back for half a mile and opened abruptly into a clearing.

A large log lodge nestled homily in the trees. Smoke rose in lazy spirals from a cobblestone chimney that

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spread out flat against the end of the lodge to form the back of what must be a fireplace inside.

The front door opened and George, Alice, and Helen came out on the porch.

Harvey opened the car door and climbed out hurriedly, rushing toward the trio. They stared at him politely as he took the steps two at a time.

The reason for this suddenly dawned on Harvey. He pulled the wart loose and threw it away. Their eyes widened in surprised recognition.

"Harvey!" Helen cried. She was in his arms in one swift movement. He was rustling her hair and grinning at George over her shoulder. Then he pulled her head away from him and held it between his hands as he feasted his eyes on every detail of her lovely face.

He suddenly remembered the chauffeur and turned to see what he was doing. The car had turned around and was going back the way it had come.

Alice and Helen began interrupting each other to tell him how much they had been worried about him, and how two priests had found them and brought them to this place.

Harvey told them haltingly what had happened.

Afterwards the spell was broken by a large-hipped, florid-faced woman who radiated good-natured countriness as she opened the front door of the lodge and announced that dinner was ready.

Harvey realized suddenly that he was quite hungry. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was two o'clock, and he hadn't eaten since breakfast.

The massive construction of the log lodge house was restful. A faint murmur of cascading water filtered through the pine trees outside, and now and then the wind rustled the trees with a soughing, restful music.

Helen watched his features, strained and tense with what he had gone through, slowly relax into smooth lines. She saw his eyes become youthful again as the memory of the dead Father Reed retreated from consciousness under the soothing spell of her presence.

All too swiftly the shadows of dusk lengthened into the all pervading darkness of night and the housekeeper waddled down from upstairs to order them all to bed.

As she climbed into her bed she wondered why it was that in the country the beds seemed so much larger than in the city, and so much more confortable. The window in her room rattled noisily with the wind, and the soughing of the trees had taken on a new, whining tone.

She reached over her head and turned out the bedlamp, and lay with her eyes wide open in the dark. Mysterious creakings came to her ears from other parts of the lodge. The rattling of the window became angry and scolding. The trees were alternately moaning and screaming as the wind gained in force...

THE SCREEN door slammed with a report like that of a gun. She suddenly became aware that she was bending over a pan of hot biscuits, sticking a straw from the broom in them to see if they were done. She straightened up and turned to see who had come in. It was Tom, her son. He was twelve years old. His black hair was tousled, one pant leg hanging down, the other neatly tucked up. There was a hole in the

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knee of one black stocking.

"He's skinned his knee again," she thought. She looked down at her own front and was surprised to see that she was wearing a skirt that went all the way to the floor.

Something strange about Tom made her look at him sharply. His face was unusually pale.

"Come here, darling," she ordered him.

He backed away from her defensively. She reached out a quick hand and seized his shirt sleeve.

"You can't get away from me that easy, youngster," she chided.

She felt of his forehead. It was hot and feverish.

"Ah ha!" she snorted. "Don't you know it's very foolish to try to hide it when you're ill? It's bed for you and some nice medicine."

"Ah," Tom wailed. "I'm not sick. I don't want to go to bed. I don't need any medicine..."

"Now this won't be bad at all," she coaxed. Tom pulled the covers over his face. She pulled them back down.

"You take some." Tom suggested cunningly.

"All right," Helen said. "I will."

The fluid in the bottle was a thick brownish syrup. The label covered one whole side of the flat bottle. Helen poured some of the fluid into a tablespoon very carefully so as not to spill it.

She put the spoon to her lips. The medicine tasted bitter, but the sugar in it gave it a rather pleasant taste, she thought.

"You may rest assured, madame," a smooth voice was saying, "That this medicine will do all I claim for it."

The word, madame, thrilled her. The peddler was so distinguished looking in his checkered suit, and she was only seventeen. She giggled nervously under the frankly admiring look in his eyes.

"I think I'll buy it," she said, trying to sound very mature. "How much is it Mr.—."

How did she know his name? Why, of course! It was on the bottle...

The face was only inches from her eyes. She tried to focus it, but it remained blurred. A dull ache throbbed in her head. She knew she was going to die.

The face came into focus for a brief instant. It was the doctor. Why was the doctor there? Was she sick? She must be, she thought.

"What's this?" she heard the doctor's voice speak sharply. "Huh! That patent medicine again. Darn funny. Henrietta had some of the same stuff on her stand. Just came from there. Same symptoms. I'd say they were both poisoned by this stuff. Throw it away. She'll be all right by morning. Somebody ought to catch up with that fellow and tar and feather him for selling poison like this."

"No please!" She sat up in bed, the movement sending waves of torture through her skull. "Don't throw it away," she added weakly. "I won't take any more of it. I promise."

"Then why in tarnation do you want to keep it?" the doctor asked, exasperated.

The vision of the handsome stranger calling her madame... How could she tell the doctor that she wanted to keep it as a reminder of the first man who had looked at her as a woman?

"I—I," she hesitated. "I want to keep the bottle."

"Well, that's different," the doctor said. "But pour that stuff out. It's poison."

Poison...

It gurgled as it gulped out of the

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bottle and stained the dirt. A few drops splashed on her skirt. She giggled guiltily.

"I'd better wash the bottle out before I put it in my chest," she thought. Lifting her skirt with one hand so that it just cleared the weeds and grass along the path to the creek she hop-skipped happily.

The cool, swift water of the creek tugged at the bottle with kittenish playfulness. The surface eddies around her wrist distorted the label on the bottle so that it was difficult to make out the name on it.

She squinted her eyes, trying to puzzle it out. And there was a face looking out of the water at her. It was a reflection. A MAN was standing behind her, looking down at her!

She half turned and looked up without rising. She could feel her heart pounding painfully against her ribs. She KNEW it was the peddler, come back.

But when her eyes looked up, it wasn't the peddler. It was George Granville. It was the idiot George, and there was an ugly wound on the side of his head.

A single stream of blood dropped down to disappear under the collar of his shirt. His eyes had the soft surface look of something that had died. They looked at her without seeming to actually see her.

She rose slowly to a standing position. The bottle was still in her hand. The bottle was very important. She felt that strongly.

The idiot George held out his hand. He wanted it. He didn't say so, but she knew he wanted it.

She held it behind her and backed away from him. She felt her shoes fill with water. The swift current of the stream was pulling at her skirt. It was raining, and idiot George was bending toward her, blood all over his head.

It made her feel strange—as though she had been through it before in exactly the same way! But she had!

HER EYES opened. She was lying in bed. The screaming of the wind was trying to rise above the pounding of the rain on the roof. Memory came back in a flood.

She got out of bed and closed the window. Then she turned on the bed lamp. The rain had come in and formed a wet spot that went halfway across the room.

There was no thunder and lightning. She was thankful for that, at least. An ironic smile twisted her lips. It seemed that every time there was a storm she had a dream.

"And what a dream!" she muttered aloud.

There was an electric clock on a small table on the other side of the room from the bed. Its hands pointed to ten after three. A worried frown appeared on her face. She glanced at the bed doubtfully.

The worried frown was replaced by a stubborn determination. She crossed the room and opened the door to the hall. The door to George's room was just across from hers. She knocked determinedly on it.

It seemed to her that everyone must have been wide awake. Not only did George come to the door, but Alice appeared in her doorway, and a moment later Harvey stuck his head out of his, too.

She looked at them in triumphant silence while they stared at her sleepily. Then she made her announcement with the air of dropping a bombshell.

"I've had another dream," she said firmly.

There was a full minute of dead si-

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lence. It was broken by Alice who began to laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" Helen asked, a trifle angry.

"You!" Alice said between laughs. "At this time of the night we are awakened. You stand in the hall in your nightgown and solemnly announce that you've had another dream. I can't help it, Helen. Please don't be angry." She went off into another wave of laughter.

George and Harvey had been looking at her keenly.

"Let's go down to the kitchen and fix some coffee," George said seriously. "This I want to hear."

Alice stopped laughing abruptly.

"What is it, Helen?" she asked with quiet seriousness. "Are we in danger?"

"No," Helen answered. "Did it ever occur to any of you that whoever made the stuff we all took way back in 1848 must have taken it too? That he is also an immortal?"

CHAPTER XIV

HELEN FELT strangely aloof from herself as she walked down the rough board stairs to the rambling front room of the lodge, and across its bearskin rugs and its oval shaped braid rugs to the swinging door that led to the kitchen.

She felt disembodied, as though she were a spirit keeping pace with her body, but apart from it. George led the way, his broad back bobbing in a way that advertised the tremendous strength of his shoulders. Alice and Harvey flanked her, each with a hand tucked protectively under one of her elbows.

Her dominant emotion was one of fatalism. At that moment her face would not have betrayed any other emotion if the whole world had suddenly gone mad.

In the kitchen she sat down woodenly and watched George make a pot of coffee. She concentrated every iota of her attention on his movements, forcing her thoughts to concern themselves with nothing else. She worried over the amount of grounds he put in, tried to estimate whether there was enough water for the amount of grounds, tried to estimate whether the grounds were drip, regular, or what.

She sniffed delicately, trying to catch the aroma, and decided the grounds were stale. She speculated on whether the water was soft or hard and decided it must be hard water in this part of Montana.

She watched the water as it began to have heat swirls in it. She watched it begin to shoot on its circuit in the coffee maker, watched the transparent water take on an uneven brown stain that quickly became a darker, more even color. She watched the slow pulsing of the ground glass heart valves of the coffee maker.

She watched the color of the water become the same shade as that of the glass where it indicated it was time to shutoff the heat. Her eyes watched George's large hands, so strong and steady, reach lazily to shutoff the butane flame.

She watched the coffee grow a deeper color than the shutoff color and approach the proper strength. She watched the heart valves slow their palpitation and finally lie still, while the coffee drained into the bottom, leaving the grounds wet and dripping.

She watched George pick up the coffee maker and tip it to fill the cups that Alice had set on the table from their place in a wall cupboard.

In her heart she felt that after this night the world would go on as it

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always had, ignorant of the gift of immortality that had almost been showered on its peoples.

She had always pitied Agnes, who grew old and hated her for remaining ever young. She had ached for the power to give Carl the gift of immortality so that he could always be with her. But now she envied them. She envied Agnes her aging. She envied Carl his well spent life and his passing when his allotted span was done. She envied his peaceful sleep that would never by interrupted by dreams bred of storms.

Then she felt their eyes on her as they waited for her to begin talking. She looked at George with his large, homely, kind face. She looked at Alice with her smooth beauty and spiritual eyes that were so expressive. She looked last at Harvey with his kind, sympathetic devotion.

A pain stabbed at her heart. She reached a hand out impulsively to Harvey and was grateful when he took it and squeezed it reassuringly.

After that she lifted her coffee cup, sipped the hot liquid, and told of her dream. Her voice was a clear emotionless tool as she listened to it recreate the dream in every vivid detail.

SHE FASTENED her eyes on a knot in the wooden surface of the table and kept them there. She did not lift them until she had reached the point where she awakened from her dream.

She didn't lift them then for awhile. She waited. The numb feeling had lifted while she was talking. She felt very much in her body now and a part of it. She could feel the tingle of her leg where it had gone to sleep. She could feel the hotness of the coffee in her throat when she swallowed it.

And she was aware once more of the sounds of wind and rain and the creakings of the building. She knew she was waiting for death to strike and she wanted it to strike swiftly—oh so swiftly. But she didn't want to see it come.

"You have a very remarkable mind." That was George's voice, subdued. "It seems to have a problem solving subconscious that hangs on with bulldog tenacity that never lets go, collecting all the elements of a problem and sorting them and re-sorting them until it finds an answer. When it does the answer seems to come out in a dream. Maybe it doesn't always come out that way; but when the answer contains something that you don't like, I think you must tell your subconscious to shut up. If it feels that it *must* talk it takes the Freudian way, a dream in symbolism that you can accept consciously because you don't understand it."

His strong hand came into the range of her eyes as he poured more coffee in her cup. She looked up at him and smiled timidly. There was a bleak, almost hawkish look in his eyes. His lips smiled back at her slightly. She looked down at the table again.

"As in your other dream," he went on, "where you refused to identify things, your mind had to use subterfuge. The only truly logical interpretation of your dream is that I, who can't remember my life at the time we all took something that made us immortal, am the one who concocted it and sold it to the rest of us, and that if I could recall that first period of my life before I became a half-wit, I could remember the formula and consequently be able to make the stuff again."

"That's it!" Harvey exclaimed.

"Yes," George said calmly. "It's obvious that the one who made the

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stuff would remember most of the people he sold it to and put two and two together, if he weren't suffering from loss of memory. That is the only logical explanation. But there is one thing wrong with it."

"What's that?" Alice asked breathlessly.

"If that were the case," George went on. "Helen's subconscious mind would have no reason to resort to tricks to get the knowledge to her conscious mind. It would have come out as a simple thought and she would have told us at once."

"I don't get it," Harvey said.

Helen could feel her body trembling. She put the cup to her lips and let coffee seep slowly into her mouth. The bitter flavor helped her.

"Well look," George explained. "What is there in the dream? There's nothing to indicate that whoever sold Helen that bottle of medicine is now one of the immortals, if we assume that the peddler and myself were not one and the same person. Yet Helen's first remark to us after she said she had had another dream was that the person who sold all of us the bottle of medicine that made us immortal was also one of the immortals. I think I'm safe in saying that she got that idea from the dream. Is that right, Helen?"

"That's right," Helen replied with a quick smile, dropping her eyes again. Her fingers toyed with the handle of the cup as it rested on the table in front of her.

"So it couldn't have been me, when I lived in the days that are a blank in my mind," George said. "That leaves only one alternative. That alternative is that the peddler came among us recognizing each of us as a customer back in 1848 when he was selling a patent medicine, and put two and two together, deducing that that medicine contained whatever it is that made us all immortal!"

Alice gave a whistle of surprise.

"But that would mean—!" Harvey exclaimed.

"Exactly," George finished. "It would mean that since the former peddler didn't come right out and tell about it, it was he who planned how to kill off the rest of us immortals so that he alone would be left."

"But, then—*who*?" Harvey demanded.

"You," George said.

HIS EYES took on a cold, wary gleam as he said this. He still stood as he had before, with one foot on a chair and an elbow resting on the knee, but his casualness had disappeared.

"Me?" Harvey echoed. "Don't be silly."

"Look at Helen and try to deny it," George said curtly.

Harvey's eyes swung to Helen. So did those of Alice and George. For sixty torturing seconds Helen remained with her eyes fixed on the table. Then they lifted slowly, looking into Harvey's, mute and full of a dying, gentle spirit.

"But it isn't true!" Harvey's voice was a hoarse, unbelieving whisper.

"You drove me back to my flat and then took the car to the garage," George said.

"Yes, I did," Harvey said. "But how was I to know that there was a bomb planted?"

"The residences of all the immortals in Chicago were bombed, but no attempt was made to kill Helen," George continued, his voice dull.

"You said the police were watching my room at the hotel," Helen spoke up for the first time. "Why didn't they stop you when you showed up?"

"Why—why, I don't know. They

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just didn't," Harvey said.

"Where did the papers get the pictures of me and Helen?" George asked. "And why didn't they print yours too?"

"Wait a minute," Harvey said. "Helen. Who did the peddler in the dream look like?"

"You." Her lips formed the word, but no sound came out.

"And do you actually remember me as that peddler in real life?" Harvey demanded tensely.

Helen looked puzzled.

"That isn't important," George insisted. "How could she remember after over a century a face she saw for only a few minutes?"

"No, I can't," she had to admit.

"It is important," Harvey said. "Can you remember the bottle, Helen? Did you put it away in your chest?"

"I can't remember the bottle either," Helen confessed, her look of bewilderment increasing.

"What was it you said about dreams, George?" Harvey asked, a desperate grin on his face. "Wasn't it that a dream brings out in acceptable symbols that which the conscious mind would reject otherwise?"

George nodded grimly.

"Then we can say that the bottle is a symbol," Harvey said vehemently. "And I in the role of the peddler am a symbol too!"

"That sounds logical to me," Alice spoke up.

"Not to me," George said quietly. "It stands to reason that whatever we all took must have come in a bottle."

"Maybe it did," Harvey said coolly. "But there's one thing we've all taken for granted, which may not be so at all. We've taken it for granted that Helen's subconscious mind has actually solved the mystery of the substance we all took. Her subconscious may be mistaken. In that case her dream doesn't amount to anything."

"Maybe you're right," George said.

"No," Helen said firmly, her lip trembling slightly as her eyes looked at each of them. "The dream came from memories as well as subconscious logical processes. I feel sure of that."

"Well, anyway," Alice said, yawning. "It's four o'clock in the morning, and we're all running around in circles without getting anywhere. Suppose we go back to bed and sleep on it. Then we can study the problem with fresh minds in the morning."

"I think the original idea is the truth," Harvey said positively. "I think you were the one that started the whole thing, George, and if you could only remember the past it would all come out."

"We can go into that too in the morning," Alice said cheerfully, "Come on. Let's go to bed. Helen, you come in and sleep with me. The storm's still going strong and I want to be on hand if you have any more nightmares."

She put her arm around Helen's waist as Helen stood up, and the two women went ahead up the stairs with George and Harvey following.

THE GIRLS paused at the door to Alice's room. Harvey passed them and stopped at his door. George turned out the lights and came up last, pausing at his door. There was a feeble night light in the hall ceiling that cast enough light for them all to see.

"George," Harvey said. The way he said it caused the girls to turn and look at him queerly.

"Yes, Harvey," George answered wearily.

"Are you *sure* you can't remember anything of your life before those kids hit you on the head in that vil-

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lage? There is a possibility, you know, that you can, and have kept it secret. Then the murder of the immortals could be laid at *your* door, in the same way you tried to lay it at mine." Harvey opened his door. He smiled bleakly at Helen.

"I'd suggest," he said coldly, "that you barricade your door. It seems that one of us two is in all probability the most cold-blooded murderer in all history. And I would like to point out that if it were I, I certainly wouldn't have taken such trouble to have George's memory restored by an operation."

He watched the effect of his words for a silent moment.

"I might add," he went on quietly, "that you barricade your door. It me that it was the only case of double amnesia he had ever heard of, and there was nothing in medical history to account for it."

With that he stepped into his room. The click of the door latch, and the noise of the bolt sliding into place as he locked the door seemed unusually loud in the pregnant silence of the hall.

Helen and Alice looked at George with a light of dawning, horrible doubt. They backed into their room. George watched them without any change of expression. He watched the door after it closed. He heard the lock turn. He saw the knob wiggle and tilt slightly as a chair was wedged under it inside.

He stood there even then, shaking his head in a bewildered manner. Finally he took one step toward the girls' room, hesitated, and, seeming to make up his mind, went back downstairs.

Ten minutes later he came back up. Under his arm was an automatic rifle that had been stored away in a closet. In his hand was a box of shells.

He looked speculatively at Harvey's door, then entered his own room. He left his door slightly ajar.

The small light in the ceiling cast its feeble rays in the vacant hall. From the girls' room came the faint murmur of voices. A two inch ribbon of black at George's door revealed nothing of what might be just inside. If George were waiting there, rifle ready, he could command the full length of the hall.

The sound of the wind outside had died down to an occasional whisper. The rain had stopped. The window at the far end of the hall was beginning to turn transparent with the first light of early dawn.

From a great distance came the crowing of a rooster, the sound seeming unusually sharp and clear in the washed atmosphere.

CHAPTER XV

"WELL," Alice said cheerily, "no doubt we've all thought of nothing but Helen's dream and what it might mean. Now suppose we relax and discuss it without any more accusations, and try to determine what it really means."

The sun was directly overhead. The four were standing on the bank of the swift mountain stream that passed near the lodge. They had by common consent refrained from bringing up the subject of the dream during breakfast while the cook was within earshot.

After breakfast Alice, who seemed to have taken the lead in things, suggested they all walk down to the stream where they could be alone.

The ground was wet from the rain of the night. The needle leaves of the pines and firs were glistening fresh. Large wood ferns shed drops of moisture, and here and there was a spot

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of blue, yellow, or indigo that came from the bloom of some wild flower.

"There are a few questions I'd like to ask you about your dream, Helen," George said. "The way I appeared to you when you turned around at the bank of that stream—was I dressed as I was when you and Alice found me after the apartment house blew up?"

"No," Helen answered slowly. "You were dressed like people used to dress back in the eighteen-fifties."

"Was I dressed like the peddler?" George persisted.

"I couldn't say as to that," Helen replied. "You were dressed much the same. I can't say what the differences were. For one thing, the peddler's clothes were very neat while yours were torn and mussed."

"Yet there was something about that particular part of the dream that made you wake up," George said.

"Yes," Helen agreed positively. "I've been trying to pin that down. It may be that it was so similar to when we rescued you in the storm that the resemblance is what made it seem familiar."

"There's another possibility," George said quietly. "It's possible that you met me or saw me during that period of my life that's blank."

"I thought of that, too," Helen said. "I've tried to recall. But I can't even vaguely remember seeing you before I met you in Chicago."

"Can you remember the peddler?" Harvey spoke up.

"I've tried all night to remember him," Helen said. "I can't. All I can remember of his face from the dream is impressions. When I don't try, I'm sure I could see his face just as clearly as in real life; but when I try, the features fade and I can't pin them down. A hat and a collar have a lot to do with a face. I feel sure the peddler wore a flat straw hat and a starched wing collar. Either of you two would look different with those on than you do without them. And even the haircuts in those days were different."

"That's true," Harvey said. "Maybe we could scrape up a straw hat and a starched wing collar someplace later on."

"There's one thing that strikes me," George said. "The doctor said that somebody ought to catch the peddler and tar and feather him. When I appear in the dream I have fresh blood on my head, trickling down under my collar. Before Helen turned to see me she thought I might be the peddler, but when she looked at me she felt sure I wasn't. She's known me as two people which are me, George, and the idiot-George. I was obviously the idiot-George in the dream, so it's possible that the dream in that respect is true memory. I might have been the peddler. I might have been caught up with and attacked. That might be what caused my first case of amnesia. Her distinct impression of my not being the peddler might simply indicate that she recognized I was changed, rather than that I was a distinctly different individual."

"CAN YOU remember the shape of the bottle or anything else about it?" Harvey asked. "That could be very significant. Bottles in those days were much different than the mass production bottles of the twentieth century."

"I can remember that the label on the bottle was pasted on a flat, sunken area," Helen said. "It had a lot of engraving on it, fine, curved lines like a bank note. At the top was a name in large black letters. The first part of the name was definitely a G,

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an R, an A, and an N. I'm quite sure there wasn't enough space left to spell out Granville, though."

"How sure are you that the first letter wasn't a T?" George asked quickly. "In those days a capital T was very ornate, with long heavy droopings from the cross bar."

"Yes," Harvey cut in. "And if the r, a, and n were not capitals the small a and the e in those days were easily confused. The name, Trent, could have fitted into a small space."

"Take it easy, Harvey," George said mildly. "We're just trying to consider every possibility and eliminate a few as we go along."

A startled look had come into Helen's eyes.

"Shut up you two," Alice said, holding up a hand for silence.

"I remember now," Helen said in an awed tone. "The name was all in capitals, and it was Grant! GRANT'S HOME REMEDY!"

A wistful smile flashed briefly on her tense face.

"Guaranteed to cure colds, coughs, rheumatism, and all kinds of fevers, besides drying up boils and carbuncles and softening up corns. When mixed with mustard it makes an excellent poultice. Spread on heavy paper it makes excellent flypaper after being allowed an hour to partially dry. I—I still have the bottle, too. It's in one of my trunks in storage in Dubuque."

"What!" Harvey said. "Then the bottle is real?"

Helen nodded.

"I can remember that stuff," Alice said. "It made me sick when I took some too." She frowned. "Unfortunately, my mother is the one who bought it, so I never saw the peddler."

"Grant!" George whispered.

"Very much like Trent," Harvey said bitterly. "Why don't you ask me the obvious question, George?"

"It's also very much like Granville," George said, ignoring Harvey's remark. "You know, it's possible I got the name of the town and my name a little confused after I recovered my memory. It's all very vague now. I'd have to look at a map to even recall the name of the town where I was village idiot so long ago!"

"Well, let's do that right now," Alice said excitedly. "We seem to be on the track of something definite."

Ten minutes later they were studying a map of New Hampshire in a much worn Atlas. In less than a minute Alice's finger pounced on the map. The point of her fingernail touched at the lettering, Danville.

"That's the name of the town, all right," George said in amazement. Grant, and Danville. No wonder I got them confused and thought my name was Granville. They gave me a railroad ticket to Manchester and I never went back."

"I lived in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1848," Helen said, tense with excitement. The railroad, this red line on the map shows the railroad. Let's see. Number 20. Up here in the corner it gives the list of railroads. Number twenty's the Boston and Maine! You could have gone on it up to Newton Junction and been kicked off, and then wandered around, winding up in Danville or South Danville where you stayed. Or you could have simply tramped over the country and wound up there."

"IT ALL adds up," George said with finality. "I was the peddler. The stuff that made us immortal was GRANT'S HOME REMEDY."

"Good for making homemade flypaper," Alice said softly.

"Can you remember anything about it now?" Harvey asked.

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George shook his head in the negative.

"If we could go back there and I could see Danville I could at least refresh my memory on that," he said. "Maybe, with my name, we could look up records. There might even be a patent giving the formula for the patent medicine, though it isn't likely."

"More than likely," Harvey said, smiling, "you just threw a few things into some sugar syrup and had some fancy labels printed, and hoped the stuff wasn't harmful."

"I might not even remember what I put in it if I could remember doing it," George answered Harvey's smile with one of his own. "At any rate, the four of us alone have reached the end of research project one..."

He looked thoughtfully at Helen.

"I wish I had a mind that worked like yours," he added. "If I had, my subconscious would be starting to work with the clues we've unearthed, and would bridge the connection with the past so that I could at least find out something about it in a dream."

"Perhaps it can, George," Helen said confidently. "The doctor removed that piece of bone that was pressing on your brain. There should be nothing there to stop the bridging of the gap with the past unless the brain tissue itself were damaged permanently."

"It's our only hope," Alice said pleadingly. "We can't travel to New Hampshire. We'd be caught. If we could find out right here what the substance was that gave us immortality, we wouldn't need to run any risks. We could hide away someplace and make that substance and give it to thousands of people in candy bars or something else. In a few years the search for us would drop completely. We could publish the formula and give it to the world. Then nothing could stop us."

"Grant!" Harvey said. "George Grant! Can't that strike even a sensation of familiarity in you, George?"

"Grant's Home Remedy!" Helen said anxiously. "Think about it. Try to grab onto even the faintest whisper of a thought about it. If you can reach into the past and get even one true memory of it you may be able to use that to break down the barrier and remember everything."

George shook his head in bewilderment.

"I'll try," he said.

"It might take weeks," Helen said confidently. "If you keep brooding on it and thinking about it, it'll come."

"There's a lot of things I don't understand about this," George said. "Why, when the operation was performed, did the idiot-George have amnesia? If, as you say, by brooding on this I can find a connecting link with a set of memories that were blocked off by an accident that turned me into an idiot, why can't I also bridge the gap to idiot-George? And why, Harvey, did the doctor say there were no known cases of double amnesia?"

"Yes!" Alice exclaimed, turning to Harvey. "What did the doctor say about that? He must have talked to you about that when I wasn't listening."

"WE talked about that when I was up in Seattle trying to get him to go down and operate," Harvey explained. "What he said, as nearly as I can remember, was that since very little was known about amnesia, and there were so many different causes, probably double amnesia was possible, just as possible as single amnesia. The reason there were no known cases of it was probably because the circumstances in one life leading to amnesia stood about as

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much chance of being repeated and producing three separate sets of memory as a coin has of standing on edge when thrown into the air and allowed to fall on the floor."

"Oh," Alice said.

"The reason I asked," George said slowly, "is because we have assumed that because I was a village idiot, and got hit on the head and became sensible and intelligent, and became an idiot after being hit on the head. I've always assumed that myself. Yet if that is the case, then why can't I remember?"

He closed the Atlas and leaned on the table.

"Let's assume that I was always an idiot until I got hit on the head in 1905, sixty-nine years ago," he went on. "What evidence is there to support that? First, we have an expert opinion from a brain surgeon that double amnesia is about as probable as it is for a man to play poker for a lifetime without getting anything except straight flushes. Other evidence occurs to me, now that I've thought of that possibility. In cases of amnesia I've read about, the victim forgot his identity and the experiences of his past life, but still was able to speak and to use the vocabulary of that past life. Yet *I had to learn to read and write.* As I recall it now, my vocabulary was very limited. My greatest difficulty was in aquiring a vocabulary which consisted of words a normal person would learn early in life. My landlady used to remark about that."

He gave a humorous chuckle.

"I can still hear her voice as she would exclaim, 'My lands alive, George! One would think before you got the knock on your head that made you a village idiot you hadn't a speck of learning!' And maybe she was right."

The others were staring at him amazed at the startling possibility that seemed more and more probable as they thought it over.

"So you see," George shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "The assumption that I had an early life *before* I was an idiot has never been anything more than an assumption with nothing to actually prove or support it. I may have had, of course. But it may have been brief. I may have been injured at birth or during my first two or three years of life, so that when I got that hit on the head in Danville that early injury to the brain was repaired. If that's so, how could I recall memories now of those years? Can any of you remember after a century and a half what you knew or what you experienced during your first three years of life?"

They shook their heads mutely.

"So," George sighed. "The question comes up in that case—when and how did I get a dose of Grant's Home Remedy?"

THERE was a startled exclamation from Helen. Her eyes were wide and staring as she looked at George.

"I remember now," she said in a horrified voice. *"You took the bottle away from me!* You held out your hand and leered at me and mumbled something about giving it to you. I did. It was full of water, but the medicine was thick and a lot of it had stayed in the bottle and you shook up the bottle and drank every bit of it! Then you dropped the bottle and wiped your mouth with your sleeve and went away. I was afraid to move until you were gone. Then I picked up the bottle and ran to the house."

"And thus," George shrugged philosophically. "We see the futility of trying to interpret dreams. That part of your dream wasn't symbolism, based on a memory of me coming from the wreck of my apartment; but

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a fragment of a true memory, lost in the dim recesses of the storehouse of your mind."

"Brought into the dream," Alice put in wonderingly in a hushed voice, "by that simply wonderful subconscious of yours, Helen, that put two and two together and got four."

"Well," Harvey said bitterly. "There goes our one chance of finding out what went into Grant's Home Remedy. There still remains the question of how you got the name Grant, George."

"Funny thing," George said, a far-away look in his eyes. "I can remember that myself now. You were wearing a white and red checkered dress. A bonnet of the same colors. Your face was awfully white and your eyes were almost perfectly round. The bottle fell on a cluster of buttercups and I felt bad about that. I loved the buttercups."

His eyes seemed to cloud over. Then they snapped back to the present.

"Yes," Helen whispered. "Yes, I can remember that too. That was the dress I was wearing. That was the bonnet."

George was grinning strangely, a wild gleam in his eyes. He gave a short laugh. He repeated it a little louder. It became a frenzied, prolonged laugh that made the chills run. He had both doubled fists resting on the table, his body bent forward, his head bent back. The mad laughter echoed from the walls and rafters of the large room.

The three spectators were as frozen statues, watching.

The mad laughter stopped abruptly. George dropped into the chair just behind him and cupped his head in his arms. His shoulders shook with sobs. He was crying.

Alice came to life. With a look of intense pity she came to him and put her arms on his shaking shoulders and buried her face in the crook of his shoulder and cried with him. Her body seemed frail and small against his huge shoulders.

Helen and Harvey remained motionless, stunned.

The emotional storm ended as abruptly as it had begun. George emitted a long sigh and straightened up.

"I'm all right now," he said wanly. His eyes turned to Alice, a tender look in them. "You loved idiot-George just as much as you do me, didn't you!" he exclaimed.

Alice blushed in confusion.

"I *know*," George said quietly. "You see, I remember everything now."

HE WAITED until full realization of this sunk in. There are some things too great for the human mind to grasp all at once. This was one of those things. Harvey, Helen and Alice had known both Georges well. For them to become one had seemed as impossible as for two different people in different bodies to suddenly become one person, mentally and physically.

It was something too startling to grasp. They knew from experience that a normal person can go into an insane rage, or get drunk, and behave like an utterly different person, though they are still the same person just the same. Abstractly, if they ever thought of it, they must have known that the self of the idiot-George and the mentally alert George were identical, and that the behavior patterns, memories, and reasoning powers of the two were all that distinguished them from each other.

These were no more startlingly different than those of the kind, easy going gentlemen who under an intense emotional change acts under an entirely different behavior pattern. Such a person, remembering his beha-

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vior under such circumstances, might claim he wasn't himself, but he knows that he actually was himself. He might wonder at his behavior when he wasn't "himself." His actions as remembered might seem utterly strange and unreal. They are memories of *his* actions, just the same.

In the same way the flood of memory of the idiot-George had rushed in to become a part of the mass-memory of George. It was an emotional shock. Yet after the first terrible moment had passed it was possible for him to draw on those memories with calmness, and know that they were *his* memories, just as vividly and factually his as were those of the other part of his life.

The alchemy of their blending was not something that could be completed at the same instant it began. It was more analogous to the meeting of two different individuals who, by long hours and days of continual conversational exchange with nothing held back and questions instantly answered at the moment of asking, become completely acquainted with each other and in complete sympathy with each other. Placed on a strictly mental level without need of vocal cords and ears for this exchange, it would be more thorough and rapid. That was the only difference in that one respect.

Already, while George waited for the shock of surprise to fade from the faces of his friends, he was appreciating the behavior, point of view, innocent philosophy, and every other flavor of the memories flooding into consciousness. He was quick to comprehend that idiot-George had been quite a psychologist in his own way, and far from an idiot in many respects. This rapid mental panorama caused smiles to flicker on and off on his face so that perhaps he gave the impression of being more the idiot than the man. It was only by great effort that he kept from chuckling in genuine enjoyment and appreciation of the qualities of his "other" self.

George found himself after a time holding Alice's hand. He found himself talking calmly, too.

Helen and Harvey listened to George's quiet voice. Alice took longer. George had been talking for fully five minutes when she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, George! I'm sorry. I haven't heard a word you said."

She straightened up and smiled, one hand wiping at the tears of joy that dampened her cheeks.

GEORGE stopped in the middle of a word. His eyes carressed her tenderly.

"I said," he smiled. "That I know how to make Grant's Home Remedy."

Alice struggled off his lap onto her feet and sat down on a chair weakly.

"Go—go on," she whispered.

"I'll begin at the beginning again," George said with an exaggerated sigh of patience.

"All right, George. I'll pay attention this time," Alice said meekly.

"I know how to make Grant's Home Remedy because I used to watch my father make it," he announced calmly.

"Your father?" Alice gasped.

"Yes," George answered. "Alex Potocki, my father."

"Alex Potocki?" Alice exclaimed.

"I'm sorry," George apologized. "Just hang onto your chair, darling. It may come out all mixed up, but I'll tell you everything. You see, as far back as I can remember I was told I didn't have good sense."

His eyes held a faraway, wistful look.

"My mother died when I was

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somewhere around fifteen, I think. My father always blamed her openly and abusively for my condition. His name in those days was Alfred Grant. My mother's name was Mary.

"As nearly as I can analyze now, my so-called idiocy or lack of good sense consisted basically of a slowness or response between mind and body. Words took too long to register on my mind. After they registered my mind seemed to go into a sort of stuttering paralysis in any attempt to talk or act. As far back as I can remember I can hear my father telling me I didn't have good sense. I came to believe it was true and acted accordingly. Maybe I didn't have. All I can remember of my mother is her thin pale face and her large, dark, tragic eyes. That was the way she always looked, and that's the way she died.

"Paw, as I called Alex, was a very cruel man inside. Outside he was smooth and very suave. He was a ladies' man. He got the idea of selling a patent medicine after my mother died.

"I can remember him bringing home the bottles, it seems now like there were thousands of them, and maybe there were."

George chuckled dryly.

"He was the only person that could ever make me work. He had me out digging up dandelion roots by the bushel for this home remedy. He said he figured they were a good tonic.

"He had gotten hold of a huge hog kettle to make the stuff. After I cleaned the roots to his satisfaction he would dump them in and let them boil and boil. I think we spent a whole day on that. He wanted the medicine to taste like medicine and be fairly thick so people couldn't say it was nothing but colored water. It took a whole day of boiling to make him realize it wouldn't thicken.

"The next morning he made a screen of cheese cloth and strained the hog kettle full of dandelion soup into a couple of wash tubs. That got rid of the roots. Then he dumped the liquid back in the hog kettle and dumped half a sack of sugar in and cooked it some more. It seemed to satisfy him for thickness when it had boiled for a couple of hours. The taste didn't satisfy him, though.

CHAPTER XVI

"'TASTES too good, George, my boy,' he said in high good humor. 'That'll never do in a medicine. Got to have something in it to make it taste bad. But not too bad, though. Otherwise the suspicious souls who insist on a taste before buying will turn it down.'

"He took a scrap of paper out of his pocket and wrote on it. Then he folded it around a coin and handed it to me.

"'Run down to the store and get this for me, George,' he ordered sharply. 'Mind you, if you don't run coming and going I'll whip you good with my razor strap! Now get along.'

"He accompanied this with a sharp slap behind that sent me running clumsily. I was back with the sack of white, crystalline lumps, and a feeling of virtue because I had made the trip in the shortest time possible.

"My father took the sack and gave me a couple of sharp looks. I knew he was debating whether he should say I could have made it quicker.

"He reached into the sack and took out one of the lumps. He held it in front of my face.

"'Alum, George,' he said gloatingly. 'The stuff that makes your mouth pucker up. But we don't want to overdo it. Can't let it get too bad tasting. Got to put in just one lump at a time and see how it goes.'

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"He dropped the white lump into the hog kettle with an artistic flourish and watched while it sank. I crept up to watch and was sent back with a slap.

"'I'll tell you when I want you close,' he said mildly.

"He stirred the liquid for several minutes, then took some of it in a teaspoon and tasted it, smacking his lips speculatively over it.

"Three more lumps went into the kettle before he decided it was enough.

"'That should do it about right,' he finally said. 'But it ought to have something in it to give it some positive effects. Nothing like getting action to convince the people that you have something worth buying again, my boy.'

"I nodded and grinned hopefully. That was one action I could get out quickly enough for it to apply to what had just been said.

"'Salts!' he exclaimed, holding up his right hand with the index finger extended toward the sky. 'That's what'll give the positive effect the customer wants. Not too much of it or it will give itself away, though.'

"And that's all that went into the concoction. I ran to the store and brought back the salts. My father measured them out as he dumped them in the liquid. I kept my distance from the hog kettle, mindful of my father's too ready hand that could reach out on the slightest pretext and give me a painful slap wherever it happened to land.

"He wouldn't trust me with the job of filling the bottles or pasting on the labels. I tried every way I could to get a taste of what he had made, without success. You see, I didn't have the slightest conception of what he had made. All I knew was that he had gone to a great deal of trouble making it, and it had a lot of sugar in it.

"He tried to sell it around Boston for awhile without much success.

"'Too much competition, George, my boy,' was his opinion of Boston. 'We'll have to hit the open road and see the world. There're hundreds of small villages and hamlets where the populace is crying for something that is sweet enough to get down without trouble, and bitter enough to taste like what they think a good medicine should taste like, and with positive enough action to convince them it is doing the work. Think of it, my boy. There are thousands of people dying right this minute who would have lived if they had had something like this to pin their confidence on!'

"THAT KIND of talk, of course, increased my desire to see what it tasted like. I think he wouldn't let me taste it while he was making it just because he liked to exert his authority. After it was bottled it was no longer a liquid to him, but bottled dollars, not to be wasted on the likes of me.

"He managed to get a wagon and a horse somehow. Things like that just happened. The outside world behaved that way to me. There was my own world of interests that consisted of flowers and bugs and an occasional friendly dog. There were my own personal devils, the younger boys, who all reacted in the same way. As soon as they discovered they were much smarter than I would ever be, and that I could be counted on to always run rather than defend myself, they would consistently persecute me.

"I think it gave them a sense of gratifying power to have a human being big enough and strong enough to break their backs whimper like

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a baby and run from them.

"All that was my personal world. Apart from that was the world of the grownups that I accepted the same way the average person accepts the weather. I couldn't hope to understand the whys and wherefores of it. If punishment descended on my head I merely learned or tried to learn how to avoid it. Otherwise I just ignored it.

"The open country was a revelation to me when we started out one day with the wagon loaded with bottles, a heavy canvas thrown over them. All my life I had known nothing except Boston. I'd been afraid to have kids I knew throw rocks at me and taunt me; but that I feared strangers and strange things.

"Regardless of what sort of man my father was, he was a sanctuary, a star about which my life revolved. So long as he was there in the background of things I found life during that period of wandering a succession of delightful discoveries. I know that, because once when I got lost I degenerated into just a huddling, terrified mass of crying flesh until he found me.

"He became Dr. Grant, the famous Boston physician who had made such a great medicinal discovery that he had given up his very lucrative practice to give it to the world. He passed me off as a ward of his that he had taken under his wing out of the kindness of his heart, and also because he needed a strong back and a weak mind to do the heavy lifting for him.

"I have no idea where we went or how far we travelled from Boston. After awhile it seemed that we had always been living that way. Memories a couple of months old had a way of seeming unreal to me.

"My only really rational world was that of sight. Colors were intensely vivid. Shapes were a poetry of a sort that only an artist can know fully. Colors and shapes were my life. All the rest, words, sounds, muscular control, were things that were extremely difficult to make behave or to understand. I could never explain any of this to anyone, and I suppose that when I saw something particularly delightful like the magic artistry of nature painting a sunset or the strangely wonderful miracle of a carpet of buttercups, to others I was drooling idiotically when in reality I was exclaiming in delight and wonder.

"During all this time I was never once allowed to get a taste of Grant's Home Remedy. The desire to taste it remained and became an obsession.

"More than once when my father was selling I would try to get the cork out of a bottle. My fingers weren't skilled enough to manipulate a corkscrew and the corks were in too far to get a grip on one and pull it without a corkscrew.

"ONCE I broke a bottle over a rock when my father was away, in the hopes that I could salvage some of the liquid inside it. That didn't work. The bottle broke into a dozen pieces and all the contents spilled into the dirt and disappeared before I could get any of it.

"It bothered my conscience so much that I didn't try it again.

"I had lost hope of ever getting a taste of the stuff when one day I was wandering around while my father was selling. At the edge of town there was a row of houses, and in back of them was the ribbon of

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dense shrubbery and trees that follow a stream of any size.

"I cut through between two houses and started down a path. That was when I saw Helen. She stood there, bent over, with her back to me. She seemed to sense my presence the moment I saw her.

"Standing up, she turned slowly around. In her hand was the open bottle so familiar to me. I wasn't aware she was afraid of me. I don't think it had ever occurred to me that anyone could be afraid of me. I held out my hand pleadingly. I didn't try to say anything. The excitement of seeing an open bottle of the medicine within my grasp had completely paralyzed my vocal cords away.

"She handed me the bottle and I drank every bit of its contents. After that I wandered back into town and found the wagon. An hour or two later my father showed up and we started out for another town.

"That night I got sick for the first time I can ever remember. I was still that way in the morning. Most of the medicine had been sold and there was room enough for me to lay on the wagon bed.

"It took me a week to recover. All that time my father grumbled about having to do all the work of making camp and feeding me. I forgot to say that I had long ago learned that housewives generally took to me. I usually fared better than my father in the way of food, by going to back doors and giving the housewife what I thought was a winning smile and mumbling the one word, 'food'.

"Toward the end I had the feeling that my father was behaving differently toward me. He would squat by his campfire and look at me thoughtfully without saying anything. He seemed to have lost interest in his habit of ordering me around and emphasizing his orders with sharp slaps.

"Then one day in a small town I left him in the morning as usual to wander around and see things. In the late afternoon when I tried to find the wagon where I had left it in the morning it was gone.

"That was the last I saw of my father. I think he had made enough money from the sale of the patent medicine to start in some kind of business. Maybe he went back to Boston. If he did he didn't have to worry about my ever showing up. I was like a dog or a cat that you take way out in the country and dump. I didn't know how to find my way home. In fact, I think by that time I had completely forgotten about Boston.

"The disappearance of my father was one of those mysterious doings of the grownup world I made no effort to understand. I had gotten over my fear of new places and was able to keep well fed. In the fall when it would begin to get colder, motherly women would give me warmer clothing. In the spring when it grew too warm for the coats I had worn all winter I would take them off and lose them.

"Life went on much the same, year after year. When one town got tired of me and stopped feeding me I moved on to another. In Danville they never seemed to tire of me. I lived there so long I couldn't remember every having lived any other place.

"The kids and their habit of tormenting me was something I had grown accustomed to. It was like the slappings of my father, just the way a certain section of the rest of humanity acted toward me. I took it stoically, just as I took the food the housewives invariably gave me.

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"Then—it happened."

GEORGE stopped talking. The quietness of his talking seemed to persist in the room after the sound of his voice ceased. It was broken finally by Harvey.

"So that's the way it all came about!" he said. "Just as simple as that!"

"Undoubtedly Alex never realized that you, George Granville, were his half-witted son," Helen said thoughtfully.

"Probably not," George replied. "He never knew I had any of that medicine. When he joined our group he probably realized at once that it was his medicine that had been the cause of our all becoming immortal. He probably recognized enough of us to make that deduction. But he wasn't the type to blurt out all he knew. He gave a fictitious name and kept his mouth shut."

"He had a lot of money when he met up with us," Harvey said. "The research project was his idea. He had something to go on. He knew the ingredients of the original mixture."

"Now that we know them," Alice said brightly. "We can start manufacturing it and making people immortal once more."

"It may not be that simple," George said, frowning. "Did you ever read the story of Jekyl and Hyde? In that story the stuff that caused the transition was some impurity in the chemicals. It may be that way with this. The illness that resulted when we all took some of the stuff may have nothing to do with producing immortality. And when it comes right down to it, how can we know when we *do* produce immortality. It won't come out for several years, and in some cases not for twenty or thirty years. If we make a lot of Grant's Home Remedy from the formula I remember, we may have nothing at all."

"That's why Alex had to have the research project to find out just what the immortality factor was," Harvey said. "What a diabolical mind! He played along with us so we would bring in all the immortals where he could wipe them out, once he had the identity of the immortality factor, and only he would know what it was."

"But then," Helen spoke up. "Where does my son come in?"

"Tom McCalmont alias Phil Cooger?" George said. "I don't know for sure."

He frowned thoughtfully at the floor.

"I can't see Alex and Cooger working together in this," he finally continued. "If Cooger weren't your son, who at least suspected the existence of the immortals, I might believe he was connected with my father in some way, perhaps as a front while my father was the real mastermind behind his organization. That may even be true. But suppose that Cooger, instead of being in cahoots with Potocki, was actually spying on the whole group of immortals. Suppose that Potocki found the immortality factor beyond question and told no one about it. Suppose Potocki then destroyed Research and all the immortals he could, in an all out surprise move to leave himself in a position to slowly, over the centuries, gain control of the world.

"Cooger, not knowing who did that, would have only the evidence provided by the police and the firemen. He would have a file of pictures and names of all the immortals if he were the least bit thorough. He could show the pictures to witnesses for identification. The firemen or neighbors of mine iden-

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tified my picture as that of the man who staggered away from the ruins of the apartment house. The hotel people would identify Helen's picture. There would be no picture of Alice yet. Harvey wouldn't be connected with any of it unless he acted suspiciously at the hotel when he asked about Helen, and since his picture wasn't on the front page with ours it seems evident that he was identified then."

"What about those men who followed me?" Harvey asked.

"THE MINUTE the doctor who operated on me reported the location of the lodge they probably sent a plane there," George said. "The plane could have arrived just in time to see your car leave, and get the license number and radio to Olympia to be on the watch for your car. When you reached Olympia they started following you while they waited for instructions. The instructions would be based on the doctor's assertions that there had been four of us. They may have taken in Jerome Dolpin and his wife Martha, your caretakers at the lodge hideout, and given them the third degree or a lie test to find out a few things."

"I see what you mean, George," Harvey said gravely. "Cooger is the political boss of the State of Illinois. It's—"

"Suppose Alex wiped out Research by himself," George took advantage of Harvey's hesitation. "Here's Cooger who has spent a lot of effort in spying on us and knows a lot about us. Maybe a lot more than we think. He would naturally figure immediately that one of the immortals, or a small group of them, wiped out the others for the same reason we figure ourselves. He might not have any indication as to which ones. All he can do is assume that those who were left alive are the guilty ones. He would have every law agency in the country looking for us."

"I see that now," Harvey said. "It casts a different light on the whole thing. If we could get to Cooger and convince him we're innocent we could help him track down Potocki."

"Don't kid yourself on that," George said skeptically. "We can't assume anything like that, at all. If we did we would wind up dead. Even if that *is* the right answer to what is going on, Cooger would never believe us. If it isn't the right answer, then Cooger and Potocki are together and we would just be playing into their hands."

"Why don't we lay low and work on the medicine formula?" Alice asked. "That's something definite without any risk. In the long run we can get the immortality factor. With luck we might have it in every batch of Grant's Home Remedy we make."

"It would take another Research to find out," George said. "I'll give you a vague idea of the problem the way it stands. First, the stuff was made in a hog kettle, a second hand one. The water used contained impurities we can't know about or duplicate. Such impurities would change in the same source of supply from decade to decade. The substances that made up the iron kettle are unknown and depend on the source of the iron, the past history of the kettle, and a lot of other things. It seems like the sugar, the dandelion roots, the alum, and the salts formed the immortality factor. Alum itself is not a standard chemical, and was less so in 1848. There are alums with no aluminum in them at all. Actually, knowing the formula for the medicine only cuts out a lot of possibilities that would have

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to be investigated otherwise.

"The immortality factor might not be a chemical with a definite structure. Or if it is, that structure might be so complex we could never analyze the substance. Since it seems obvious Alex found it, we must assume it *can* be isolated and analyzed. Remember, though; he knew that formula and it took him ten years to isolate the right substance. He had the facilities to eliminate one substance a week, so he must have investigated hundreds."

"We've got to track Alex down and get it from him," Harvey cut in. "There's no other alternative."

"And get caught before we go a hundred miles?" Alice exclaimed.

"We'll have to disguise ourselves carefully," George said. "The best disguise would be age. If we look sixty no one will think we're immortals."

"I think Alice should stay out of this," Helen said. "If she comes along we're putting all our eggs in one basket. If she stays behind and we three get the works, she can devote the rest of her life to searching for IF."

"Nothing doing," Alice said heatedly. "Where George goes I go."

"I think all three of you should stay behind and let me go alone," Harvey said. "I'm officially dead now. If I got killed by Potocki or by the law there would still be the three of you to carry things on."

"We'll all go together," George said quietly. "We four have gone through this much together. We might as well go the rest of the way. I'm sure the future would mean little to any of us if the others were gone for good."

"The four horsemen of the Apocalypse, that's us," Alice said solemnly. She held out her hand, palm down.

With a solemn twinkle in his eyes George placed his under hers. Helen and Harvey placed theirs on top. With the fourway handclasp the bargain was sealed.

CHAPTER XVII

AGNES looked from her cards to the face of the man across the table from her. His hair was snow white, combed back carefully. His face had the paleness of one accustomed to living indoors. There was an almost unnoticeable wart on his right cheek just under the eye.

He returned her look with a polite smile, then pursed his lips and looked past her absently.

She dropped her eyes to the stack of chips he had pushed gently into the center of the table a few minutes previously and thought of the many times during the past week he had done the same, and always pulled them back with a stack of her own chips added to them.

Her eyes pulled back to her cards. There were five clubs in her hand. It was draw poker with no limit. She had drawn one card to fill her flush. The man across the table had opened the pot in the first place, and taken three cards on the draw.

She was aware that he must know she had a flush. She knew enough about poker to know that his eyes had analyzed her every move and facial expression. The eagerness with which she must have looked at the card she drew, and the look of satisfaction at finding a club which she was not poker-faced enough to conceal, as far different from the expression she would have shown if she had drawn to two pairs.

She glanced quickly at him once more. His eyes were politely mocking her. Her fingers shook as she counted out the chips to call his bet. When she had them counted out

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she pushed them into the center quickly before she could change her mind, then spread her hand out face up.

"A flush!" she challenged him, nerves on edge.

She gripped the edge of the table while his eyes coolly inspected her cards.

"So it is," he murmured. "Too bad. I have a full house." He reached across the table and spread his cards beside hers and lazily raked in the chips.

His long, too-white fingers sorted and stacked them neatly before him. His eyes still mocked her in a veiled way. He looked slightly bored.

Agnes bit her lip to hold back the angry words that threatened to come out. There were only a few white chips left in front of her.

She shoved back her chair. Clutching her purse with both hands she went across the gambling room to the door marked Office. Her knuckles rapped twice sharply, paused then rapped once more.

Behind her the white haired gentleman had risen and was also crossing the room. He managed to be in a position where he could see into the office as Agnes opened the door.

He had worked a week for this moment. His calm face showed nothing of the emotions beneath. If he made one single suspicious act that would draw the attention of any of the house employees he knew he would never be able to leave the place without being questioned.

That questioning would undoubtedly come around to a close examination of his hair which would disclose the fact that its whiteness was artificial. From there they would go on until they determined who he was.

The man he saw sitting behind the desk in the office during the brief second Agnes had the door open might even be able to recognize him under his disguise.

IT WAS NOT Phil Cooger, however, that Harvey had waited a week to see. He had seen him many times during that week. It was the inside of that office that he had waited to see, and he was very disappointed.

He continued on toward the doorway leading to the bar. His going there was very natural. No drinks were served at the table and there was a steady stream of players going to and from the bar out in front.

He sat down on a stool at a vacant section of the ornate bar. A broad shouldered young man who seemed too young to belong there took the stool next to him.

"Rouell," Harvey said when the barman looked at him briefly. The young man was looking directly at him in the mirror. Harvey pretended not to see this.

"Pretty lucky so far," the young man remarked. His voice sounded casual and friendly. Harvey ignored this for a moment, then did a double take.

"Oh!" he said. "You mean me?"

He returned the young man's smile and shrugged modestly.

"I work here," the young man explained apologetically. "So don't worry about me being another bum who wants to cry on your shoulder."

The barman set a bottle in front of Harvey and the change for his dollar bill.

"Oh?" Harvey said. He poured the rouell beer into the glass, his eyes occupied with the operation.

"Why do you have to pick on Agnes all the time?" the young man said in a mildly complaining tone. "She's a friend of Mr. Cooger's, and he might not like it."

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Harvey's pent up nerves relaxed.

"Sorry Mr.—" Harvey hesitated.

"Just call me Schmoe," the young man replied.

"Sorry, Schmoe," Harvey grinned. "I didn't know that."

The young man called Schmoe dropped his legs to the floor and stood up. He laid a friendly hand on Harvey's shoulder.

"You know it now, friend," he said. "By the way, you seemed interested in getting a look at the boss a minute ago. Would you like to meet him?"

Harvey looked at the young man's reflection in the mirror behind the bar without turning. He saw nothing but innocent friendliness in the young man's face.

"You're mistaken about the first," Harvey said disarmingly. "As to wanting to meet him..." He grinned knowingly at the reflection. "If my luck turns on me I'll probably *have* to do that."

A fleeting expression of disappointment shadowed the young man's smooth features. His hand slid lingeringly from Harvey's shoulder.

"In that case," he said with a casual smile, "let's hope your credit's good." He sounded like a youngster skillfully imitating the mannerisms and talk of an experienced adult.

Harvey's hands felt colder than the glass they were wrapped around. He signalled the barman with his eyes and ordered a cup of black coffee, pushing the rouell beer away.

While he drank the coffee his eyes studied the barroom and the area next to it where there were tables and a small dance floor, with a television set occupying a strategic position.

Alice sat at one of the tables, only it didn't look like Alice. Her face was still beautiful. No amount of disguising could erase that. It was now the face of a woman of fifty-five or sixty who had paid a great deal of money in a futile attempt to make it look young.

THERE could be no better defense for a young lady alone in the Club Rouell. A rather handsome man in his late thirties paused at her table and started to sit down, squinted slightly as his eyes looked closer at Alice's skin, then continued on to another table.

Harvey smiled to himself. Then he forgot about the smile and left it hanging on his lips while his mind froze tensely. A profile was reflected in the mirror. It was that of a man who had just entered the club and was walking toward the back rooms.

The man was Alex Potocki! He was walking with the sureness of stride of one who has walked the same path many times and knows just where he is going.

Was he here to play cards? Or was he coming to see Phil Cooger? There was a great deal of difference, and Harvey had to find out.

He knew that Alex would recognize him even through his careful disguise if he took a good look at him. That risk had to be taken for two reasons. One, it was almost imperative that he find out. The other, there was a stack of chips representing almost fifteen hundred dollars on a table in the gambling room that belonged to him, and if he walked out without cashing them in, Schmoe would be suspicious.

Harvey knew just how dangerous it was for him to go back into the card room. One slip and he would be lost.

He would have to tell Alice about Potocki, as she had never seen him and hadn't recognized him as he walked through. He rose abruptly and walked toward the back rooms.

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Instead of going into the gambling room he turned aside and entered the men's room.

There he wrote a brief note and folded it into a small square. When he left the men's room he went back to the bar. Instead of sitting down he paused and let his eyes survey the tables. The small square of folded paper was cupped in his right palm.

His eyes paused on Alice. To all outward appearances he was just another old man looking for a girl. With his left hand he carefully brushed an imaginary speck off the lapel of his coat and sauntered toward the table where Alice sat.

When he paused in front of her she looked up curiously, as at a stranger. He bent toward her with a charming smile on his lips, placing his right hand on the edge of the table so that the note would drop unnoticed by any watching eyes into her lap.

"Beg pardon miss," he murmured.

"Sorry mister," Alice replied, her voice low, but able to carry to the nearest tables. "You've made a mistake. I'm just in here for a few drinks and to watch the show."

"Please accept my apologies," Harvey said stiffly, his smile vanishing. He straightened up and looked over the room undecidedly, then shrugged his shoulders and returned to the card room. Several pairs of amused eyes followed him until he vanished into the back rooms.

Agnes was back in her seat at the table, he saw. There was another five hundred dollar stack of chips in front of her. The young man, Schmoe, was slouched against a wall. Alex Potocki was nowhere to be seen. Harvey wanted to be sure. He pretended interest in another table where straight stud was being played. It gave him a vantage point from which he could survey the large room carefully.

Every nerve in his body tingled with suspense. At any moment Alex might appear and recognize him through his disguise.

FINALLY he was sure Alex was nowhere in the room. That meant he had gone to the office, and was therefore tied in with Phil Cooger.

Harvey walked swiftly over to his chair at the draw poker table and picked up his chips.

"Quitting?" Agnes asked.

Harvey smiled politely and nodded.

"What's the matter," Agnes sneered. "Not sporting enough to give the loser a chance?"

Harvey ignored this and continued picking up his chips.

"Just a cheap professional," Agnes said, raising her voice.

Harvey's eyes darted over toward Schmoe. That young man gave his shoulder a gentle push and straightened up. Harvey turned his attention back to Agnes.

"I believe," he said slowly, "that it's a universal house rule that a player may quit when he chooses without recriminations from any other player."

"There's also a rule in this house," Agnes said, her voice even louder than before, "that professionals aren't allowed to fleece the suckers."

Schmoe had stopped beside Harvey by now.

"What's the matter, friend?" he asked.

Harvey shrugged helplessly and nodded his head toward Agnes. He gave Schmoe a knowing look.

"He took my money and won't give me a chance to get it back," Agnes said, still in a loud voice.

"He has a right to quit," Schmoe said pleadingly. "Get it back from the next customer."

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"Next customer hell," Agnes shouted angrily. "I've lost enough money in this two-bit joint to buy the place. I say I get it back from him."

"Give her the chance," Schmoe said to Harvey. "It's all right."

Harvey knew what he meant. If he lost the house would pay him to save a fuss.

"How about a cut for high card?" Harvey suggested.

"O.K.," Agnes said, her anger subsiding, replaced by the fire of gambling fever. "Fifteen hundred dollars."

"You only have five hundred in front of you," Harvey objected.

"That's all right," Schmoe said hastily. "She's good for it." He took the card deck and lifted a generous section of it. The card she exposed was a king.

Alarm bells were ringing inside Harvey's skull. His hand trembled slightly in spite of himself as he spilt the meager remains of the deck and turned it over, exposing a king. He smiled slightly.

"All right," he said. "You've had your chance. Should we quit?"

"Yellow?" Agnes sneered. Harvey shrugged resignedly. Schmoe shuffled the cards again.

"You first this time, friend," he said as he set the deck down.

Harvey split a thin half dozen cards off the deck and turned over a three.

Agnes' grin was foolish as she took half the remainder of the deck and turned it over. Her card was a deuce. Harvey took advantage of her stunned condition to turn away from the table and start toward the cashier's window.

Phil Cooger stood in his path. Behind him stood Alex Potocki.

THE ALARM bells were pounding violently inside Harvey's skull now. But, as in the thick of battle, his nerves were dead. Not by a flicker of an eye did he betray recognition of Alex.

He said nothing, pausing in his stride to wait for Cooger to step aside.

Over the shoulders of the two men Harvey could see Alice standing in the doorway looking at him. And suddenly, he could feel the weight of the flat gun cradled against his ribs. He had grown so used to it during the past week that he had almost forgotten it.

Alex Potocki was staring at him. Phil Cooger, a cigar in his mouth, was looking at him closely, his face inscrutable.

A strange thought intruded itself into Harvey's mind. How could a man who had killed some seven hundred people in cold blood still look human?

Alice had backed out of sight at the doorway. The alarm bells were subsiding.

"Would you mind stepping into my office?" Phil Cooger said past his cigar.

Without answering, Harvey looked past him to the office door as though seeing it for the first time. He looked back into Cooger's face and nodded.

Cooger and Potocki stepped aside. Harvey walked past them to the office door.

He paused while Phil Cooger stepped past him and inserted the key and opened the door. He stepped across the room and dropped his handful of chips on the bare desk, his eyes darting around the room as he heard the door close at his back.

The balance hung by such a slender thread now. If both Alex and Cooger believed him to be dead, killed in the Seattle hospital while trying to escape, they wouldn't look at him too closely. Alex wouldn't bother about the similarity of his voice to someone he believed dead.

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They had no reason to believe otherwise than that he was dead.

He turned with naturalness and looked questioningly at Cooger.

The gang boss counted the chips on his desk by nudging them with his finger and tipping them over.

"Seventeen hundred dollars in chips and fifteen hundred coming on that cut," he said admiringly. "Thirty-two hundred and fifty dollars!"

Harvey still said nothing. He fixed an expressionless smile on his face.

Phil pulled out a fat billfold and extracted a thick bundle of currency. He counted out six five hundred dollar bills, two hundreds and a fifty.

Harvey picked them up and shoved them carelessly in his pocket. He turned toward the door. He could feel his heart pounding violently now. His legs felt like they were wading through thick oil.

The street door seemed hopelessly far away. If he got out of his office he still had to brave the stares of a hundred people. His movements were jerky, mechanical. At least they felt that way. There were needles at the nape of his neck where cold eyes were boring in.

"Well, I might as well be going Phil. Drop up to my office sometime the next few days. Forty-one-oh-six in the Copper Building."

"O.K., Alex. I'll do that."

Harvey's fingers froze on the door knob. The first sound of Alex's voice had stopped his heart for a brief, terrible instant. The meanings of the words, the natural and easy conversational tone, it penetrated slowly to him that he was not under suspicion. To these two men he was no more than a customer of the club rouell who had had a lucky night.

The door lock buzzed open. Harvey turned the knob and went out. Agnes was sitting in the same seat at the draw table she had had all night. She didn't look up.

He started toward the exit to the front of the club. The young man, Schmoe, caught his eye and nodded a cheerful though casual congratulations.

Alex Potocki brushed past him just before he reached the doorway to the bar. Less than a minute later Harvey stepped out onto the sidewalk and turned his face into the cool night breeze and took a deep breath of relief.

A taxi pulled up before him. Alice signalled to him from inside. He opened the door and settled back beside her as the cab moved away from the curb.

CHAPTER XVIII

HARVEY and Helen stepped out of the elevator and turned to the right. They were followed by George and Alice. The four of them appeared to be two old couples in their sixties who carried their age very well.

They paused at a door carrying the legend, "4106, Alex Potocki, consulting biochemist."

Harvey opened the door with his left hand. Inside was a reception room with nicely upholsted plastic and chrome furniture. A very attractive young lady sat behind a small desk. She smiled a welcome to the four dignified old people.

Harvey advanced to the desk with a disarming smile and laid a card before her. The card said, "Andover Chemical Co." In the lower left hand corner in finer print it said, "C.G. Cortry, Pres."

"Do you have an appointment?" the young lady asked.

"No," Harvey replied. "You see, my regular consulting chemist just died recently, and I'm looking for another. In fact," he turned and included the other three with a smile. "My partner

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and I sort of combined pleasure with business on this trip to Chicago. Besides seeing all the sights we are looking for another consulting chemist."

He took the stance of a self-important business man.

"I rather think Mr. Potocki will see us," he said pompously.

Helen and Alice had taken seats on opposite sides of the reception room. Each had opened her vanity case and seemed intent on inspecting its contents. George stood casually by the hall door, in such a position that if it opened he would be behind it. He held his right hand in his coat pocket.

The receptionist flicked a toggle switch on the base of her phone and spoke into it.

"There's a Mr. Cortry to see you, Mr. Potocki," she said sweetly. "On business."

She hung up and smiled at Harvey politely.

The door to the inner office opened and Alex stepped into view.

Then several things happened. George reached over and turned the bolt that locked the outer door. Helen and Alice each took a small automatic out of their vanity cases and pointed them at the office girl. Harvey pulled a larger automatic from his own pocket and pointed it at Alex.

George slowly brought his own gun into sight.

Alex froze for one brief instant and then jumped back into the inner office and tried to close the door. Harvey hit it with his shoulder. It flew open to reveal Alex staggering backwards.

He caught himself at the edge of the ornate desk and stared with wide eyes at the advancing figures of Harvey and George.

"What is this?" he demanded angrily.

"You still don't recognize us?" Harvey asked, amazed.

Alex licked his lips and looked from Harvey to George, dawning recognition and a growing terror on his face.

"Take off your coat and vest," George said coldy. "And do it slowly, with no sudden moves."

Alex obeyed.

"Now the shirt," George commanded. "Then go over and face the wall."

HARVEY took a flat case from his breast pocket and opened it on the desk. He fixed a hollow needle onto a glass tube with a plunger inside. Then he shoved the needle through the thin rubber cover of a small bottle and pulled the plunger out slowly, drawing the pale yellow fluid into the glass tube.

Alex had watched this over his shoulder. He was trembling visibly.

"Don't move," George warned. "This isn't going to kill you."

Harvey jabbed the needle into Alex's left shoulder, being careful to keep out of the line of fire and ready to spring back.

"Careful, Harvey," George said tensely. "Be sure it isn't in a vein."

"It isn't," Harvey said calmly.

He shoved the plunger in slowly. When it had gone as far as it could he jerked the needle free and held his finger over the puncture until he was sure the liquid wouldn't drain out.

"That's just to put you to sleep so we can take you out to the car," he said encouragingly.

"You can turn around now," George said. "Better go over and sit down on your davenport until it takes effect."

"If you think you can carry me out of here," Alex said desperately, "you're crazy."

He went over and sat down. He was already beginning to look drowsy. In

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three minutes he closed his eyes and rested quietly.

Harvey straightened him out flat on the davenport.

George went over and closed the door to the reception room and came back.

"What is your name" he asked suddenly.

"Alex Potocki," came the answer, mouthy and mumbled from the drug.

George frowned. The truth drug was one developed in World War III, and was said to be invariably perfect. It was supposed to be impossible to tell a lie within two minutes after the prescribed injection. Its only drawback was that it also kept the mind from making those slight conjectures that are nearly always necessary in answering any except a very simple question.

He repeated the question and got the same answer.

"Well, Harvey," George said with a shrug. "Either he's immune to the drug or his real name is Alex Potocki."

"My real name is Alex Potocki," came the drugged answer.

"Have you ever used another name?" Harvey asked.

"Yes."

"What name were you using in 1848?" George asked quickly.

"Alfred Grant."

Harvey and George smiled at each other triumphantly. Then they stopped grinning. Each saw in the other's eyes that the moment had come.

It was George who asked:

"What is the equation for the immortality factor?"

The answer came as had the others, slowly and drugged.

"I don't know."

THEY HAD come all the way for this. They had risked their lives constantly, suffered privations and hardships, gone through the tightest police net in the world, knowing that one slip meant death for them all only to have Alex say he didn't know the answer.

"He *has* to know!" Harvey said desperately.

"I—don't—know," Alex repeated tonelessly.

"Do you know how to isolate it?"

"Yes."

"Then it's one of those substances that can't be analyzed?" George asked.

"Yes."

Harvey went over to a chair and sank into it weakly.

He listened while George asked the few remaining questions that confirmed what they had surmised. That Grant's Home Remedy was the answer.

There were additional questions that brought out the method of extracting the immortality factor from the remedy, its physical appearance, the dosage, and what function it performed in the body.

It seemed that nearly every cycle in the body's metabolism was a degenerating cycle. The highly complex molecules of immortality factor seemed able to take on a thousand different tasks at will. Not only that, they could never pass from the body with any of the wastes. They entered into every cycle and completed it perfectly.

The reason they could not be analyzed was because they seemed to be a complex of different molecules with shifting molecular patterns. In research the complex had exhibited almost intelligence, so uncanny was its power to settle into any metabolic cycle and solve its imperfections.

Further questioning brought out the fact that the immortality substance could not be simply produced

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by making the mixture according to the original formula.

That was the reason Research had taken so many years to isolate it. It had one of the properties of life itself. Some of it had to be already present before any more of it could be produced.

By some freakish cosmic accident there had been present in the original mixture made in the spring of 1848 a minute quantity of IF. There was none present in the batch Alex made up for Research. At first he had concluded that IF must be due to some impurity in the original mixture. It had taken a long time for him to get around to re-examining the original mixture, made with a half pint of his own blood added to the dandelion roots in the first brewing.

THERE WAS A SIX OUNCE BOTTLE OF THE PURE SUBSTANCE IN HIS DESK.

Harvey searched Alex's pockets and found the key to the desk and opened the drawer that contained the bottle. It was not labelled.

He and George looked at the innocent appearing white crystals that filled the bottle with a mixture of feelings. It was enough of IF to make a hundred thousand people live forever. It was the end product of Research. It was—IF!

"Let's go, George," Harvey said in a subdued voice.

"What about Alex?" George asked.

"The longer we stay here the greater the chances of our being caught," Harvey said. "We can kill him right now or leave him as he is. He should be killed."

"I don't think I could do it," George said.

"Neither could I," Harvey agreed.

They went into the outer office. It took only a few moments to tie and gag the receptionist.

"Potocki will wake up in a few hours," Harvey reassured the girl.

THE TIRES made a humming noise on the metal grid of the bridge. Dubuque was just ahead.

"I still can't believe it," Helen exclaimed in semi-hysterical relief. "We got away without any trouble. We're out of the state. Our worries are over. Every second you were in that inner office with Alex I expected someone to try to come into the office."

"We aren't out of the woods yet," George laughed. We've a long hard program ahead of us. We're going to have to make tons of this stuff and see that everyone all over the world gets some."

"I—I still can't believe it," Helen said. "It seems like we're trying to go against nature in some way, and that some Power will prevent us from doing that. It wasn't intended for the human race to become immortal."

"It does seem hard to swallow all at once," Harvey admitted.

"It doesn't seem right for us to do this," Helen went on. "What of the population problem? If no one dies except by accident, in a hundred years the world will be too small for the population."

"There are other worlds," Alice said. "Man will have to expand now."

"But how do we know it will all work out?" Helen said. "It's like a river flowing through a valley. I mean the human race is like that. To block the gates of death is like damming the river. The waters will back up and fill the valley and flood everything."

Harvey tooled the car smoothly through the traffic of downtown Dubuque.

"Your analogy is very good," George said after a while. "There's one thing we must remember through all our doubts. We can't sit down and

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solve all the problems that will come up before we do anything.

"Suppose we started out with the idea that we should give IF to only those people who proved worthy of it? Who would they be? The Einsteins and Newtons and the great statesmen? Maybe! Then what of the man who could have become greater than any of those in a hundred years more?"

"Not only that," Harvey said as he speeded the car up again on the open highway west of Dubuque. "I think we've ignored the main issue. Old age is a disease. We have the cure. Where would the medical profession have gone if it had decided that for the good of the race women who couldn't have normal births should be forced to die in childbirth? Where would it have wound up if it had decided that since the tendency to cancer is inheritable, all potentially cancerous people should be sterilized? There are strong arguments in favor of such things. Survival of the fittest keeps the race strong. But a doctor can't take on himself the problems of race survival. His patient is in need of help he can give. That help might contribute slightly to the decadence of the race in a few thousand years, but the doctor can only think of the immediate welfare of his patient. The overall problem must work itself out, and if in the long run the race dies out entirely due to preservation of the physically unfit by the medical profession, it is just too bad.

"I think we should look at it the same way. We should give everybody immortality, since we can. The problems that rise up when that is an accomplished fact are for the human race to solve, not us."

THE MILES sped by swiftly. Helen thought of the other time they had covered these same miles. George had been the idiot-George. Harvey had been at the wheel then, too.

She turned around and looked in back. George was sitting much as he had sat then, with Alice's head resting against his huge shoulder and seeming so small.

She thought of all that had happened since then—and all that was yet to come in the future.

"Problems have a way of working themselves out if you let them," Harvey was saying. "Take Alex, for example. He is a ruthless murderer, and plans on becoming dictator of the world. His plans hinge on everyone else and then out through the gates of death. If those gates are closed he will never accomplish his aims. If he lives, in a few centuries at the most he will get over that and learn to fit in.

"Take Phil Cooger. He's a master organizer and politician. If his talents were turned into legitimate channels as they would be eventually, he could become a great force for good.

"All those problems are just too big to bother about. We have a simple job to do. We have to make a few hundred thousand people immortal whether they want to be or not. We have to make sure the whole world knows how to become immortal, so that no legislation can stop it."

"And then?" Helen asked softly, a wistful look in her eyes.

Harvey took his eyes off the road to glance at her briefly.

"And then," he smiled. "We'll take a vacation of a couple of centuries in a little cottage on the shore of the Pacific and watch the waves beat against the rocks and wear them away. About once every ten years we'll turn on a news broadcast and find out what is going on in the world."

"I know what I would like to do," Alice spoke up from the back seat.

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"George and I will have a cabin just around the bend from yours. I'm going to take about a dozen alley cats and the same number of plain old mongrel dogs and give them immortality. I'm going to see how far they can advance in those two centuries."

"I know what I'm going to do," George said with a sly grin.

"I'll bet I won't like it," Harvey grinned back at him through the rear view mirror.

"I'm going to get a rooster," George said. "And make him immortal. When he gets to be a hundred I'm going to invite you and Helen over to a chicken dinner."

...And that's just what he did.

THE END

WARNING!

★ by Jon Barry ★

THIS IS A genuine warning. There is a problem which many of you will encounter—though you may not be aware of it yet. It concerns fluorescent lamps. It has been discovered that human beings are quite susceptible to beryllium poisoning and various beryllium compounds form part of the fluorescent materials of the lamp.

The trouble comes up when people dispose of their old lamps. Fluorescent lamps are generally broken up, and thrown away. In the process of breaking up the lamps, people expose their hands and mouths to the noxious vapors of finely powdered beryllium compounds. This is extremely dangerous.

The electric light companies are issuing warnings; if you have occasion to break up any fluorescent lamps, break them under water! Do not allow any of the powder from them to get into sores or open wounds. It is dangerous!

Every home owner who uses fluorescent lighting is cautioned against exposing himself to the materials lining the walls of the bulbs. Industrial organizations which use fluorescent bulbs in large quantity have generally taken the problem under consideration. They break the lamps up from a distance or break them up under a layer of water. There is no danger then so long as the water or the powder does not get into the mucous membranes or into flesh wounds.

Companies are taking steps to eliminate the dangerous beryllium compounds, but it will be at least a couple of years before the last of the lamps are out of service. Fortunately the problem has been caught up with before severe and large scale damage was done. And the manufacture of beryllium containing bulbs has been stopped.

* * *

RAINMAKERS

★ by L. A. Burt ★

IN DIFFERENT parts of the world the ancient tribes had their own peculiar ways of producing rain. The Dieri tribe of Central Australia took drastic measures during severe droughts. They called upon their ancestors whom they called Mura-muras, to give them the power to make a heavy rainfall. They felt that their ancestors had a great deal of influence with the rain-clouds. First, in order to draw the rain from the clouds, they dug a hole about twelve feet square in the ground. Over this they built a cone-shaped hut of logs and branches. Two wizards of the tribe who were supposed to have close connections with the Mura-muras, were then bled by an old man of the tribe who used a sharp flint to slash their arms below the elbows. Their blood was made to flow down on the other men of the tribe who sat huddled in the bottom of the pit. During the bleeding, the two wizards would throw goose down about. Some of it would stick to the bloody bodies of the men and some would float about the hut like rain clouds. As the ceremony progressed, two large stones were placed in the center of the hut. They represented gathering clouds and presaged rain. After the bleeding, the two wizards carried the stones about fifteen miles from the hut and placed them in the top of a tall tree. Last of all, the young and old men of the tribe gathered about the hut and, stooping down, butted at the hut like rams. They may use only their heads and they keep this up till they force their way through and reappear on the other side. The piercing of the hut with their heads represents the breaking up of clouds, and the fall of the hut symbolizes the fall of rain. The act of placing the two rocks which represent clouds high in a tree, is an invitation for the clouds to mount in the sky.

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The BOTTLE

By GUY ARCHETTE

THE BOTTLE was squat and green and had once been stoppered with wax. It rested on the bureau top, and Colvin's fingers touched it in a kind of mute appeal as he stood before the mirror, hesitating.

He felt the now familiar dread again, stealing through him like tendrils of icy mist. Suppose, he thought, suppose he were to gaze at his reflection and find that his existence of the past several weeks had somehow been only a dream, only a remarkably vivid and life-like illusion.

Suppose he were to find that his renewed youth had gone...

He thought of Doris, and desperation swept him. It couldn't end, he told himself. It couldn't end now, when Doris had come to mean so much to him.

A defiance born of his panic impelled his eyes upward. He looked at himself in the mirror.

The face that stared back at him was smooth and unlined, a lean face, engaging if not actually handsome, the face of a young man. The dark hair visible at temples and forehead was thick and unmarred by any trace of gray.

Relief flooded Colvin. But in the next instant he realized that nothing had actually been settled. Each day it would be like this. Each day he would approach a mirror in dread of what he might find.

One day, he felt certain, he would look at his reflection and find that the dream was over, the song ended. His features would be lined and worn, his hair thinning and touched with gray. As it had been in the beginning...

It would be like a nightmare—a conscious nightmare. He would be awake, in full possession of his senses, yet facing a reality more horrible than anything imagination might conjure.

Slowly he turned away from the bureau, his shoulders slumped. With a threat of that kind hanging over him, he had been a fool to speak to Doris of marriage. A fool—yet not for worlds would he have missed her delight or the sweet shyness of her consent.

Marriage to Doris, he decided now, was out of the question. His life with her could never be anything more than a mockery and a sham—doomed eventually to be exposed. He would not be playing fair with her. The shock of his transformation, when it came, might be more than her sanity could bear.

It would be best never to see Doris again, to go someplace where her nearness would not otherwise tempt him into abandoning his resolve. He realized that this was the most considerate thing to do—but every fibre of his being seemed to writhe in rebellion at the thought. Not to see Doris again would be like giving up sunlight and music, like shutting himself away from everything worthy and fine.

He kneaded his hands in misery

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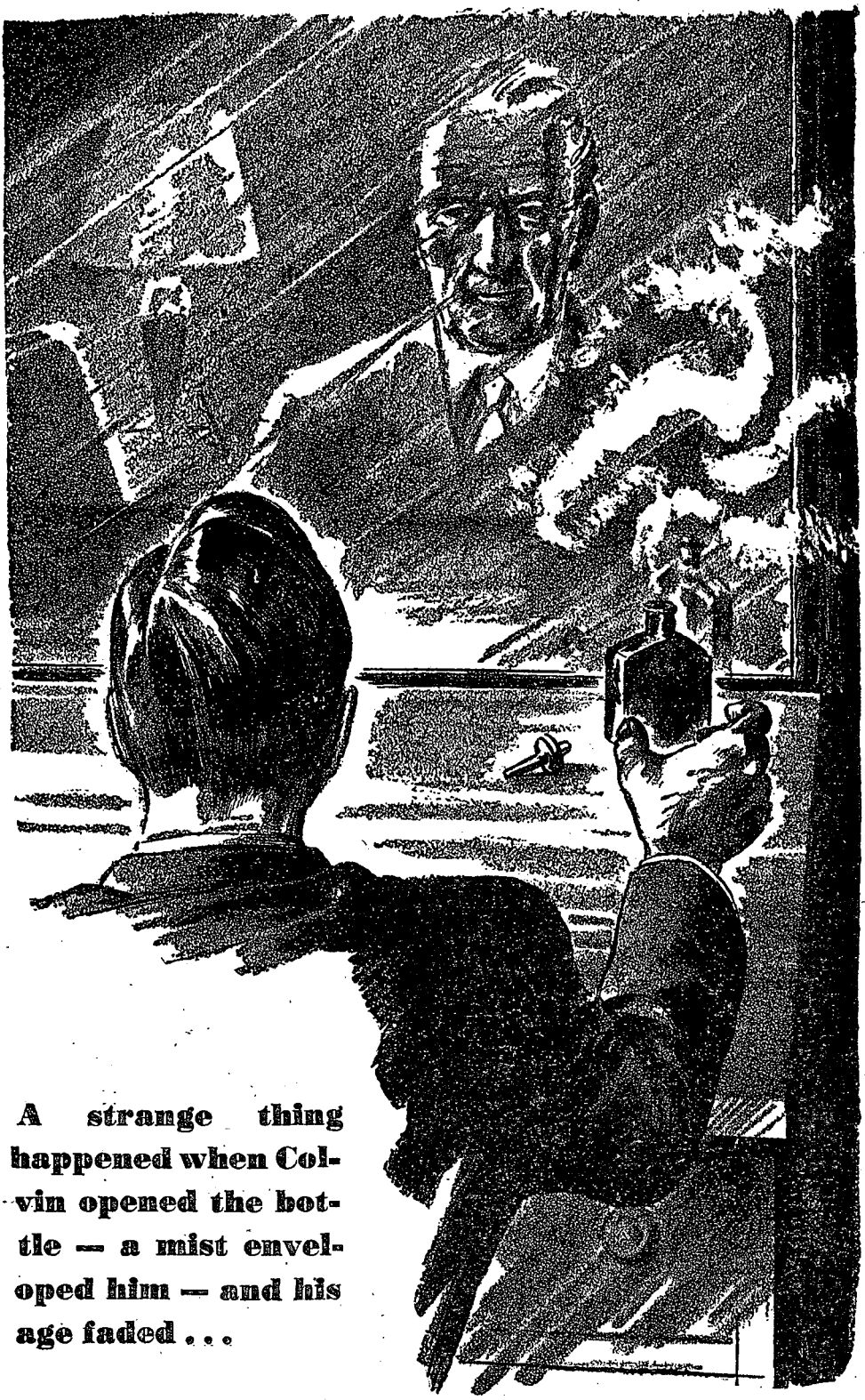

A strange thing happened when Colvin opened the bottle — a mist enveloped him — and his age faded . . .

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as he became aware of the full implications of his dilemma. He felt crushed between two equally impossible alternatives. There had to be some answer to his problem, he told himself. It could not be completely hopeless.

And then the answer came to him. He knew it had been in the back of his mind all along.

He would have to tell Doris, of course, tell her what had happened to him, and how it had happened. The decision of whether they would or would not continue their relationship would be hers to make.

But how could he possibly tell her of the utterly incredible? How could he tell her of something that went hand in hand with black magic and supernatural?

COLVIN glanced back at the squat, green bottle on the bureau top, and he knew how his story would begin. It would begin with that fateful evening, almost two months before when he had been crossing the boulevard and had met the gnome-like man

He had just left the offices of the construction firm where he was employed as an architect, having been working late over some plans. Anxiety filled him, an urgent need for haste. He would have to hurry if he wanted to catch a glimpse of the girl with the soft brown hair and the large dark eyes.

He did not know her name. He knew nothing about her. He knew only that she appeared almost every evening at the modest little restaurant where he ate before taking a bus to his two-room apartment on the north side of the city.

She evidently had been coming there for some time before he grew conscious of her. But once he did, it was not long until he found himself hopelessly in love. It was ironic and not a little fantastic, considering that he was so much older.

She could not be called a beautiful girl, though she seemed so to him. She appeared too grave, too reserved, for that. She was slim and dark, and she was always well and quietly dressed. She wore no makeup and little or no jewelry. She did not smoke. These qualities, as much as her air of intelligence and maturity, appealed to him with an intensity he had never before experienced.

He had never spoken to the girl. He had never done more than steal surreptitious glances at her from where he sat in pretended concentration behind his evening newspaper.

He could not be sure if she were aware of him, if she had ever so much as glanced in his direction. And it annoyed and hurt him. He wanted desperately to walk over to her table and make an effort to get acquainted. But he knew he couldn't do that. She might think him nothing more than an elderly flirt. She might see no further than his lined, graying exterior, though he prided himself that his body was still straight and firm despite all the years he had spent bending over a drawing board.

His familiarity with the girl was entirely one-sided. It was a thing of stolen glances and secret admiration. He lived only for those exhilarating moments when she was present in the restaurant with him—present, yet as aloof and unapproachable as the mountains of Tibet.

He was thinking of her that particular evening, as he hurried across the boulevard. He stopped in the center of the broad traffic lane, waiting for a break in the almost solid stream of cars that roared past. Dimly he was aware of another man a few feet ahead of him, and a short distance to his right, an excavation or something of the sort, which had

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been railed in with boards and hung with red warning lanterns.

Neither seemed to have any particular importance, but in the next few seconds he noticed that the other man was in motion, walking erratically, with his hands outstretched before him as though ill or drunk. He was stumbling directly toward the excavation and the flimsy wooden railing around it.

The scene abruptly took on a strangeness, an almost garish clarity. The headlights of the passing cars swelled and ebbed in a pulse-beat of blinding brilliance along the dark artery of the boulevard, silhouetting the other man as he groped his way to certain injury. Colvin started forward, a cry of alarm surging to his lips.

"Good Lord—look out there!"

And then he had caught the other by the arm and was pulling him back. He had been none too soon. Anger swept him, a sudden flash of emotion that merely underscored his sense of relief. He said sharply:

"Why don't you watch where you're going? You almost—"

HE BROKE off as the other's face turned and lifted to him. The face somehow of a beardless gnome, not old and yet not young. A face in which age and youth were somehow weirdly mingled. In some unfathomable fashion it shocked Colvin. Owl-like eyes rose to blink dazedly up at him. He himself was not a tall man, yet he seemed so in comparison. The other was short and frail, with a head that seemed abnormally large.

The gnome-like man's tiny mouth shaped itself and moved in speech. Colvin could not distinguish the tone of his voice over the roar of passing cars, but somehow he understood clearly what was said.

"I...I am sorry. The lights...they confused me. I am not accustomed to much light."

Colvin felt a cold finger of unease touch him. The other wasn't sick or drunk. He was just...strange, in a way that could not be explained.

"All right," Colvin said gruffly. "Just stand still. I'll take you across to the sidewalk."

The cars presently thinned out and were gone as the stream was dammed by a changing traffic light down the boulevard. Colvin escorted his charge to the sidewalk, hesitating a moment before he turned away.

"This is where you wanted to go, isn't it?"

"Yes....I believe so." The gnome-like man was glancing with an uncertain air along the street.

"Are you lost?" Colvin asked.

The owl-like eyes lifted to him slowly and, it seemed, sadly. "I have been lost for many orbitals. I arrathened in the wrong time direction, you see...."

"Oh." Colvin said. He felt the unease again, more sharply than before, and he stirred to complete his motion of leaving.

A small hand gripped his arm.

"I am in your debt, it seems," the gnome-like man said. "Is there any favor I can return?"

"Why...no." There was a fluttering in Colvin's chest, almost of panic. In the temporary quiet that had fallen over the boulevard, still another aspect of the other's queerness had dawned on him. He realized that the gnome-like man had not actually been using his voice, even though his lips had moved. Yet in some incomprehensible way Colvin had a distinct impression of audible speech.

He stared at the stranger in growing alarm. The owl-like eyes were studying him with a fixed intentness. They seemed to widen and glow. They seemed to draw him into them,

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as though into the depths of a luminescent sea. He had the eerie sensation of being searched...read.

Then he became aware that the gnome-like man was speaking again in his toneless, soundless way.

"You are not happy, Peter Colvin. It is because you too, in your own fashion, are lost in time. But I can help you. I have knowledge and abilities of a certain order...anachronistic, you might say, though you would term them supernatural.

"The solution to your problem is obvious...and simple enough. To obtain the fulfillment of your dreams, it is necessary for you to regain a portion of your lost youth. I can make it possible for you to accomplish that."

Colvin floated in the luminescent depths. He felt lulled, somehow suspended. Dimly he was aware of the dark canyon of the boulevard, with cars roaring by again in a parade of flashing headlights.

THE SCENE abruptly sharpened, swooped into focus. For an instant his senses possessed an abnormal clarity. He had the distinct impression that he was alone, that the gnome-like man had somehow gone. It was as though the other had *turned* in some inexplicable way that had taken him from sight. But that must have been an illusion, for in another moment he saw the stranger standing before him with an object held in one extended hand.

"Please accept this as a token of my gratitude, Peter Colvin."

Taking the object, Colvin peered at it in dazed wonder. It was a bottle, he saw, squat and green and stoppered with a substance that seemed to be wax.

"The bottle contains a liquid compound," the gnome-like man went on. "You might call it an elixir, for it will react upon the mechanism of your body in such a way as to produce a period of renewed youth. The effects are not permanent, yet they will endure long enough for you to attain certain of your immediate desires.

"Do not hesitate to use it. The elixir creates no adverse physical results, as numerous others who have benefited from it would gladly testify.... And now farewell, Peter Colvin. May the future bring you much happiness."

With a grave nod, the gnome-like man turned and set off down the boulevard. Colvin stared after the strange small figure until it finally turned a corner and was gone from sight.

Slowly, then, his eyes went back to the bottle in his hand. An elixir, something that would temporarily restore youth. It was incredible, he decided, impossible, even in this day of scientific miracles. The gnome-like stranger was obviously a psychopathic case, despite his uncanny abilities. And, yet...*youth!* The thought brought a tightening to his throat. Youth! To be as young as the girl with the brown hair and the dark eyes! To be able to meet her, speak to her!

Recollection of the girl made Colvin suddenly tense. He realized that much precious time had passed during his encounter with the gnome-like man. He had already been late for his one-sided rendezvous at the restaurant. Now the girl would be gone.

But perhaps she had remained a little longer than usual. Acting on this hope, he thrust the bottle into a pocket of his coat and hurried into motion.

She was not there. Feeling suddenly lost and forlorn, he sat down at a table and gave his order. He was not quite sure of what it was, nor

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was he quite sure of what he subsequently ate. Thoughts of the girl and of the green bottle made a confused pattern of eagerness and doubt in his mind. Later, still in a mental chaos, he took a bus to his apartment.

He placed the squat, green bottle on the bureau top, and he kept glancing at it in aching indecision as he undressed and climbed into pajamas. It seemed to draw him with a dark fascination. He returned to it and held it up against the light.

He raked his lower lip through his teeth, frowning. Was it really an elixir of youth? Would it really make him young again, even if temporarily? The gnome-like man had insisted it would. But of course there was no such thing as an elixir of youth. It was an impossibility.

And yet if it weren't—

Youth....He had never actually known the full meaning of the word. Youth to him had been a crippled father dragging his way painfully over the floor. Youth had been a blurred, vaguely unpleasant treadmill existence of work by day and school by night. Youth had been parties and picnics he had never attended. Later, of course, had come success in his chosen profession. But with it had come the realization that life had passed him by. He had few friends, few pleasant memories to look back upon. He was too shy, too indrawn to cultivate people.

HE THOUGHT of this, and he thought again of the girl with the brown hair and the dark eyes. He remembered the way she walked, the way she held her head. He remembered each change of expression on her face. She had the dignity of a queen, and yet she was very feminine and sweet. And suddenly, he wanted intensely to be young again. He wanted intensely to believe that the green bottle actually contained an elixir of youth.

A wave of recklessness abruptly swept over him. There was only one way to find out. To be sure.

Hands trembling, he tore at the wax stopper with his nails. He tilted the bottle up. He drank.

The elixir had a somewhat exotic spicy tang.

Afterward he stood very still, realizing what he had done. The walls of the room seemed to recede past him, into a vast distance. Silence closed around him, deep and cold.

Finally he went to bed.

In the morning Colvin rose at the same time as always, pulling up the window and beginning his setting up exercises. The events of the preceding night came back to him little by little, like fragments of some fantastic dream. But habit was strong. Busy with his morning routine, he did not try consciously to recall what had happened.

It was not until he had started shaving that full memory came. He looked into the bathroom mirror. The face that stared back at him was not the face he had grown accustomed to seeing in late years. It was a much younger face. Firm and smooth. The lines that had been deepening in it were gone. And when he looked for the gray in his dark hair, he found that it had gone, too.

The full significance of the thing struck him, then. The impact was almost electrical.

He was young again! As young as the girl with the dark eyes.

The elixir had worked. It had opened the door to a new world.

For a time Colvin wandered dazedly about the apartment. The thing that had happened to him was so tremendous he could not get accustomed to it all at once. He wanted to shout. He wanted to cry. Several times he

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rushed to a mirror to assure himself it was not just a dream.

A chance look at the clock brought him up short. It had grown late. He would be late to work.

Abruptly he shrugged. Work? No, he couldn't go to work. With his appearance so completely altered, he would be nothing more than a stranger to the people at the construction firm. He would have to write a letter of resignation. Then, later, he could find another job.

Additional problems had to be settled. Among the most immediate were those of moving to another apartment and of changing his account to a different bank. Letters would accomplish most of what had to be done. Where letters would not suffice, he could use simple subterfuges of one kind or another.

He spent the remainder of the morning writing and packing. Then he dressed and left the building, taking care that he was not seen. He had used a sudden illness as the explanation for his abrupt departure, and he did not want the sight of a mysterious young man to cast suspicion upon the maneuver.

Out on the street, with sunlight falling warmly on his face, he had an exhilarating sense of freedom, as though he had been released from a long imprisonment. He would have liked nothing better than simply to keep walking while he reveled in the delightful knowledge of his rejuvenation. But the practical side of his nature asserted itself. Certain aspects of his new existence had still to be attended to.

Over a long-delayed breakfast he studied the advertising section of a newspaper. Small furnished apartments for rent were not numerous, but the luck that seemed to date from his meeting with that gnome-like man held good. He located a suitable apartment on his third try, and then arranged to have his belongings moved in.

Other details occupied him for the rest of the afternoon. He was careful to watch the time. The approach of evening found him ready for his daily and hitherto one-sided rendezvous with the dark-eyed girl. He had promised himself it would be different now.

HE WAS surprised to find the restaurant crowded when he walked in. All the tables seemed to be taken. And as he glanced about, he saw the girl. She was one of the few persons present who were sitting alone.

He knew what he had to do, then. He did it without a moment's hesitation.

He walked over to her table.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" he asked.

"Why...no." She looked rather startled and hesitant, and somehow she seemed even lovelier than before.

Colvin smiled his thanks, hung up his hat and coat, and sat down. The girl had lowered her eyes back to her food. It was apparent that she was aware of him and had thrown up a barrier of reserve. He did not want to rush matters, to make her retreat still further. He kept his eyes from her, glancing with a quiet, impersonal interest about the room.

He was handed a menu by a waitress who had taken his orders many times before. She glanced at him in a vaguely puzzled way, but without recognition. Colvin, however, breathed more easily when she was gone.

He found that the girl was watching him. In a tone of casual interest, he asked:

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"Is the place always as crowded as this?"

She shook her head, and her lips seemed to curve in a slight, shy smile. "They're attending a convention at a hotel down the street."

"You too?"

"No. I work near here."

He liked the way she spoke. Her voice was low and soft. A frank straightforward voice, neither coy nor cold.

He made a few other remarks from time to time, always careful to keep up his pretense of merely casual interest. He did not trust himself to do more than that. He did not want the girl to suspect that he was deliberately arranging this. He did not want her to sense his eagerness. She was friendly enough, but uncertain of him and wary.

Finally she rose to leave. She glanced at him for an instant as she reached for her purse and gloves. With an effort Colvin masked his disappointment at her going. He smiled briefly up at her and half rose from his chair. He hoped she would understand it as an acknowledgement of their exchange of a few friendly words.

She did. Her answering smile came quickly. It was as though she'd had it ready all along. Then her dark eyes fell, and she strode away.

It began like that. The conventioneers were still present at the restaurant on the two following nights, and he used that as an excuse to continue sitting at her table. Each time they spoke more easily and at greater length.

Colvin learned that her name was Doris Hendricks. She worked for a large advertising firm. And like himself, she lived alone, having come to the city from a distant suburb several months before. He was delighted by other points of similarity between them. They liked the same books, had the same interests, and they even shared indentical political beliefs.

On the fourth night, as she prepared to leave, Colvin spoke quickly to detain her. It was a crucial moment for him, and he found it impossible to maintain his outward calm.

"I...I was wondering," he said. "That is, if you aren't doing anything this evening...."

She said simply, "I haven't any special plans."

"Well...would you like to see a show?"

"I think that would be fine." She smiled suddenly, a little breathlessly. Her dark eyes seemed to glow.

It was a perfect evening, just as Colvin had always imagined it would be. It was like a dream breathed to life and set to music. He could not recall the full details of it. There was just Doris, and everything else—the lights and the sounds, the color and movement—was just a frame for her. Doris laughing, Doris serious, Doris looking interested or surprised. This was all he wanted to remember.

HE SAW her each day after that. It seemed to him a natural thing to do, and in no way did Doris indicate that she regarded it otherwise. They would meet at the restaurant, or he would call for her at at the place where she lived. They attended movies or stage shows. They bowled or went dancing. On Sunday afternoons they visited a zoo or a museum.

Frequently, then, he would have dinner at her apartment, and they would spend the rest of the evening there. They shared a growing preference for this way of passing the time. Though limited by a ridiculous-

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ly tiny kitchenette, Doris proved an excellent cook.

"I seldom bothered to fix anything for myself," she said once. "It's fun to have someone to cook for.... Someone like you, Peter."

After the few dishes had been washed and put away, they would play gin rummy or checkers, or simply sit close together and listen to the radio, holding hands. They said little. They had reached a state of mutual trust and understanding beyond the need for words.

It was on one such evening that Colvin proposed.

"I wish we could always be together like this," he said. "Just you and I, Doris. I wish we were married and had a place of our own."

She lifted her head from his shoulder, her lips curving in a gentle smile. "Yes, Peter."

He said tensely, "Doris, do you really want it that way? Will you marry me?"

"Yes," she said. Her dark eyes were shining.

Later, returning to his apartment, he recalled what the gnome-like man had said about the effects of the elixir being only temporary. But just how temporary? A matter of months, or years? Suppose...suppose he married Doris and suddenly became old again?

It had been from that moment on that he developed his fear of mirrors.

In the days that had followed, the fear had grown, had become an obsession. Doris had sensed the change in him. Her bewilderment and concern had added to his distress.

And now, gazing at the squat, green bottle on the bureau top, he knew he would have to tell Doris what had happened to him. There was no other way out. He could not simply leave her. Nor could he marry her for a few stolen moments of happiness.

But later, when he appeared as usual at her apartment, he found that his resolve had weakened. Doris wore a new dress, and had made the unusual gesture of adding a touch of color to her lips. She had never seemed more appealing.

"Peter!" she said softly, smiling She came to him, lifting her face for his kiss.

He held her tightly, lingeringly knowing he might never hold her again. Then, with a little laugh she stepped away from him, performing a mock-curtsey as she indicated her dress.

"How do you like it, Peter? It's brand, spanking new—or didn't you notice?"

'I noticed," he said. "You make it look beautiful."

She stiffened in sudden dismay sniffing. "The pork chops! They're burning!"

She turned in a whirl of skirts and hurried to the kichenette. She was very busy for several minutes. There was an energetic rattling of silverware and a clattering of dishes.

COLVIN listened to the sounds feeling the pain grow within him He knew Doris was putting on an act, pretending a carefree attitude that she did not actually feel.

He wanted desperately to enter into the spirit of the thing, however artificial. He wanted desperately to reassure her, to recapture the trusting intimacy they had shared. But this problem was a dark, cold weight on his mind. He had to tell her of course. And he knew what her decision would be. How could he possibly expect her to marry a man who would suddenly and without warning turn old?

"Soup's on!" Doris called. She grinned impishly as she brushed a

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curling tendril of brown hair from her forehead.

Her little pretense wore thin through the meal. And then, as they put away the dishes and seated themselves in the living room, the periods of strained silence between them grew longer.

It was Doris herself who suddenly brought the situation to a head.

"Peter, there's something wrong. I know there is. We can't go on like this. Whatever it is, we've got to settle it here and now."

Colvin met her searching eyes, feeling tense and cold. This was it, he knew. He was oddly relieved that it had come so soon.

Doris touched his arm pleadingly. "What is it, Peter? Why don't you tell me?"

"All right," he said. "I've been meaning to all along, but I just couldn't work up the courage." He took a deep breath, and the fear in him grew. "Doris, I'm not really a young man. That is, I look young, feel young—but I'm much older than you. I know it sounds crazy, and the explanation is even worse. But please listen, and don't hate me too much."

He told her everything. He told her of his chance meeting with the gnome-like man. He told her of the elixir and of what it had done. And finally he was finished.

He looked at her face, and then his eyes dropped in despair to his twisting hands. That sweet, familiar face. So cold, so impassive.

Doris said nothing. She stood up. Very quietly she went into her bed room.

Colvin stood up, too. Slowly and wearily. It was the end. He knew it it was the end. Amid a bitter, death-like silence, he turned to get his hat and coat.

"Wait, Peter."

He swung around, dully surprised. Doris was back. She came across the living room, toward him, and her face was somehow strange.

"You thought you had fooled me, Peter," she said. "But you were fooled, too."

He stared at her, not knowing what she meant. And now she was smiling at him. A tender, suddenly tearful smile.

"Shall I show you something, Peter?" she asked. "Look."

Her hand came from where she had been holding it, behind her back. In it was a bottle.

A squat, green bottle that had once been stoppered with wax...

THE END

GIANT BABIES

★ by H. R. STANTON ★

TESTING aircraft, jets and rockets by means of prototype models is nothing new. It's been done for a long time. But the Navy is engaged on an extensive large scale program in which they build flying models of their planes on a scale of one to ten. These miniature planes (often ten feet long) are fully equipped in every detail and powered by appropriate scaled motors or by electric motors powerful enough to get them into the air.

In addition they are radio-controlled and laden with automatic instrumentation which gives a detailed report on their condition in the air and on the ground or in water. This is a far cry from the costly method of assembling full sized planes at a cost of ten or twenty million dollars and then still not knowing whether they'll handle fairly well.

The changes can easily be made in the models, and when they are thoroughly tested, it is easy to go ahead confidently with the real McCoy, knowing that the chances are better than good that the job will prove perfectly satisfactory. Model work is an important part, now, of all industrial activity.

* * *

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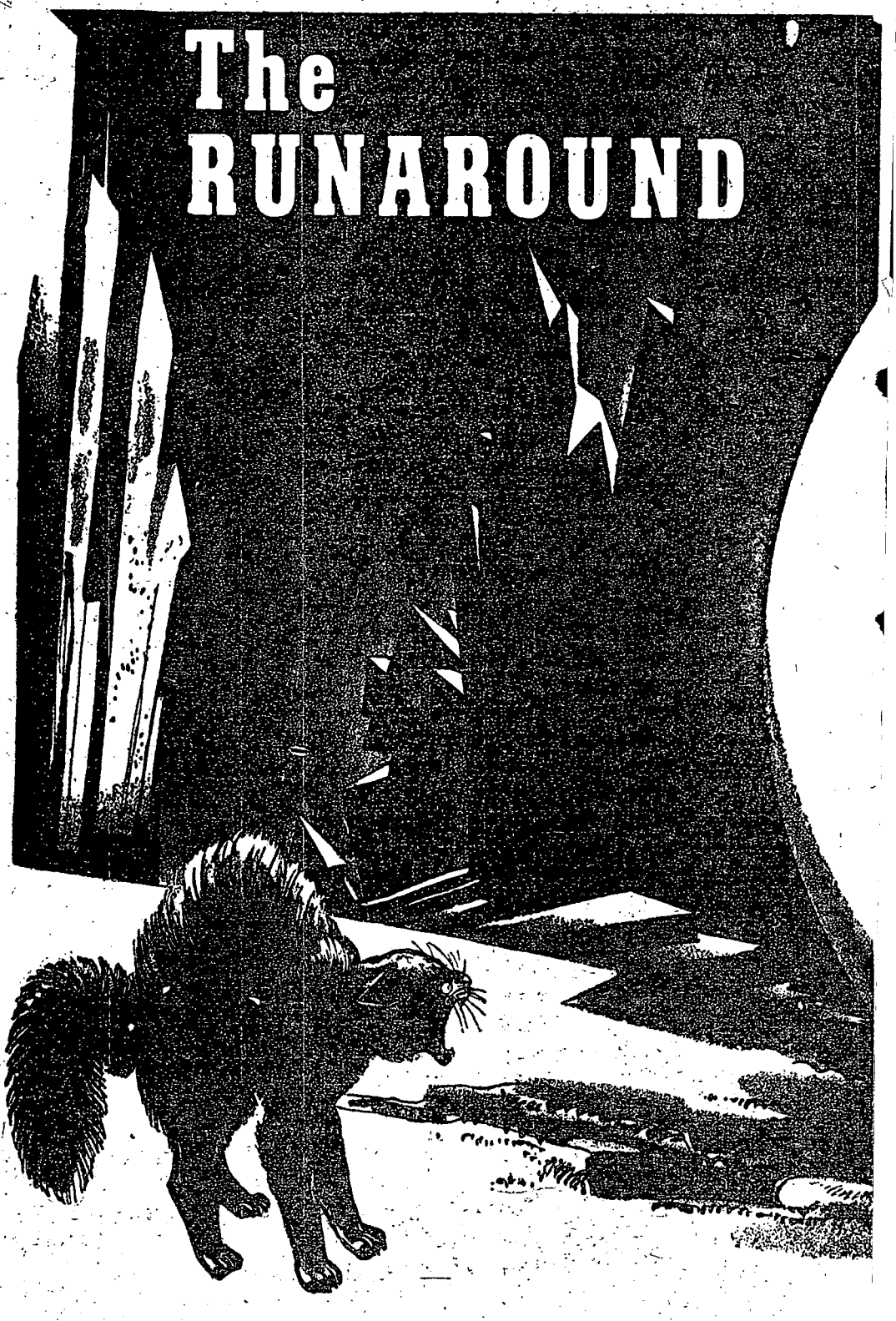
The RUNAROUND



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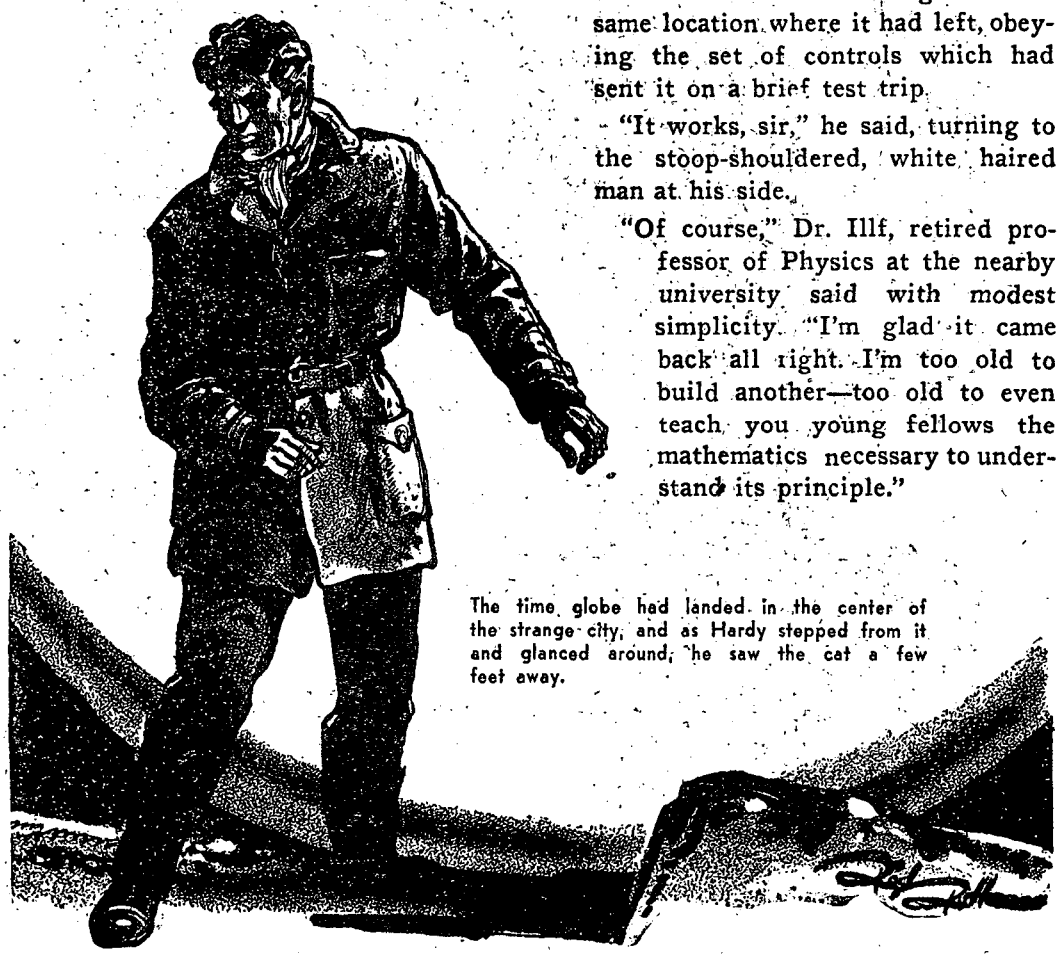
By CRAIG BROWNING

Raff Hardy went thirty million years into the future — but after he got there he found that his coming had been anticipated!

RAFF HARDY'S eyes rested with pride briefly on the almost plain looking metal globe resting on a concrete pedestal in the center of the large laboratory. A brief moment before, it had not been there. Brief seconds ago it had been a cloud, an eye-cramping haze, whirling in rapid, dizzy motionlessness as it fitted into the time stream again at the same location where it had left, obeying the set of controls which had sent it on a brief test trip.

"It works, sir," he said, turning to the stoop-shouldered, white haired man at his side.

"Of course," Dr. Illf, retired professor of Physics at the nearby university said with modest simplicity. "I'm glad it came back all right. I'm too old to build another—too old to even teach you young fellows the mathematics necessary to understand its principle."



The time globe had landed in the center of the strange city, and as Hardy stepped from it and glanced around, he saw the cat a few feet away.

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The old man's eyes twinkled with an affection born of three years of close companionship with Raff Hardy while they had toiled at building the time globe.

"You'd better get in and get started," he said firmly. "I'll expect you back in an hour, but take all the time *there* that you need. A year from now should be a nice, safe time to land in. Go out and buy a newspaper and take a look around. Then come back to an hour from now. I'll be waiting."

"Good bye, sir," Raff said solemnly, shaking Dr. Illf's hand.

He took the steps up to the entrance port lightly, his well proportioned, muscular body moving gracefully. Inside, he turned and looked out, smiling and waving to Dr. Illf before shutting the thick hatch cover, and sliding home the bolts.

The interior was a maze of intricate instruments and circuits, all riding on springs to cushion them from shock. It wouldn't matter if the time sphere fell or moved on its journey through time, because on its return it would merely retrace its spatial path and wind up back on the pedestal. It would be on the pedestal an hour, a day, perhaps years, before it was moved, and in its journey forward in time it would merely occupy the space co-ordinates it would occupy at those various times, since it would at no time split into two spheres.

Dr. Illf had explained all that. When he had explained it, it had all sounded understandable to Raff, but afterwards he had been unable to remember it clearly enough to understand it again. All he knew was that when the sphere was travelling in time and was apparently not present in the laboratory, it was really there, but not at the time.

RAFF STRAPPED himself into the shock seat and made sure all the controls were within easy reach. Then, holding his breath, he adjusted the controls for a year in the future and pressed the stud that sent the imagitronic charge surging back and forth through the complex circuit from one bank of the storage plate to the other.

Raff knew that to the aged scientist, outside the sphere, standing well away from it on the laboratory floor, it was blurring as the time field built up about it and dragged it forward into the future.

To him, strapped securely in the well cushioned shock seat inside the sphere, there would no such blurring. He hadn't known exactly what to expect. He was the first living thing to be in the sphere. The test run had been merely for the purpose of determining if the sphere would actually leave the normal time continuum and return again safely.

The very instruments had been calibrated from the mathematics of the theory, and had not been checked yet. It was the theory that said the sphere would stop a year in the future at the setting he had made—not actual experience.

And the theory and mathematics could not tell the reactions and experiences that would take place in actual time travel.

Raff's finger had barely lifted from the relay stud when a tingling sensation rose throughout his whole being. With it, rapidly, there came a deep agony, as of files and saws grating on living bone. It pulsed slowly, its torture sending waves of nausea through him.

With pin-prickling, cold beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead, he tried to stop the sphere. He groaned at the realization that no

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provision had been made for emergency stops.

Gritting his teeth and hanging onto consciousness by sheer will power, he unstrapped himself and moved the settings down to six months, then to two, then to twenty-four hours.

His fist still gripped the handle of the control when he blanked into unconsciousness, and as he fell, the pointer rose under the unconscious manipulation of his slipping hand until it pointed well into the uncalibrated part of the dial that indicated the far future.

SLOWLY consciousness returned. Dust clogged his nostrils. His body still tingled, but the bone-pain was gone. He opened his mouth to breathe, and dust choked at his dry throat.

Gasping, he struggled to an upright position and clawed at his face. It was several minutes before he had cleared enough of the dust from his eyes, nose, and throat so that he could relax and look around.

The interior of the time sphere was still intact. But it looked like the plumbing of a house that has otherwise burned to the ground. The outer shell had disappeared!

Suddenly he realized that the dust that had choked him had been the oxides of the metals that had gone into the shell alloy—and it had been of the very finest stainless steel, supposed to last forever!

How far into the future had he gone? With that question pounding into his brain, his eyes turned to the dial and saw the pointer—way past the point that was calculated to represent the year five thousand.

He studied the dial and tried to estimate. From the calibrations Dr. Illf had marked it was apparent that he had gone into the future at least ten million years! And there was no way back—unless civilization existed yet, and had the secret of time travel.

Suddenly he noticed something which gave him both hope and despair. The storage condenser had dropped and shorted, draining off the accumulation of imagitrons which had been the means of driving the time sphere. That meant, possibly, that he might be closer in time to the point where he had started than he thought, but also meant that unless the current civilization had an accumulation of imagitrons he was doomed to remain here.

For the first time he turned his eyes away from his immediate surroundings and examined the countryside about. He was in the exact middle of a long, perfectly straight—almost a street, but perfectly smooth and lined with structures which might have been houses except that they had unbroken walls in which neither windows nor doors could be seen.

He stood up weakly and staggered over to the nearest wall. Leaning against it, he let his eyes wander up and down the length of the lane, trying to make some sense out of things. An absolute silence pervaded everything—silence and total lack of movement. Only his raw breathing disturbed the quiet.

"Meaow!" The familiar sound exploded behind him with startling suddenness. He turned quickly. The quick movement made him lose his balance. As he fell to the smooth pavement he caught a glimpse of a cat darting around the corner of the building against which he had been leaning.

He climbed to his feet again and stood, swaying, until the dizziness passed.

"Here, kitty, kitty, kitty," he coaxed, advancing to the corner of

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the building cautiously.

"Mrrrowrr?" the cat said politely, from a distance of about ten feet.

"Nice kitty," Raff said coaxingly, taking a cautious step toward it. Its tail twitched slightly toward the end, and Raff, somewhat experienced with cats, paused. He didn't want it to run away from him again.

The cat was a little female, exactly like any one of a million that he had left behind in the old world. It was coal black with a generous white patch on its face and throat, and four white paws. Its whiskers were overly long, the left side ones being white and the right ones being black. It differed from ordinary cats only in the large bulge to its forehead, and that bulge was barely noticeable.

THE CAT seemed to have been studying Raff while he was studying it. And now it seemed to to reach a decision. It came toward him slowly, in the immemorial custom of cats making friends, its tail straight up in the air, its feet stepping with slow grace, and a purr welling louder and louder from its throat.

"Nice kitty," Raff breathed softly and soothingly.

The cat rubbed against his leg archingly, its purr rising into a crescendo of unbelievable loudness, coming from such a small cat.

Raff bent over slowly and petted it, rubbing behind its ears softly. Then he reached under it to cradle it in the palm of his hand and pick it up. He lifted gently and—

He stared at his hand incredulously. It had passed right through the cat as if it weren't there! Not only that, the cat hadn't seemed to be aware of the fact.

"Prrowrr," it said in a confidential tone of voice. It rubbed against his trousers again while he looked down at it.

Cautiously he bent over once more and petted it. It felt solid to his touch. He rubbed behind its ears, exerting a gentle pressure. His fingers encountered nothing but solidity. Gently he gripped the skin on the back of its neck and lifted. For an instant there was a feeling of weight, and then his fingers seemed to pass through the fur and come away with, —nothing!

The cat walked slowly around in back of him and rubbed against his trousers again. Clamping his lips into a grim line of determination he stooped down and gathered the cat into both hands and lifted.

The cat, with a purr of contentment, rose with his rising motion, riding in his hands.

"Well!" Raff said with relief. "At last!"

He cradled the cat to his chest and petted it.

"Prrrrrr," the cat said contentedly, relaxing along the length of his forearm.

Feeling less lonely now, Raff turned his attention once more to the mystery of the strange, house-sized, structures that lined both sides of what seemed to be obviously a paved street.

They were of different colors, each a uniform color, with no architectural adornments of any kind. They seemed made of a plastic. The top edges where the roof joined were as sharp as the corners where the walls met. And there were no doors or windows.

The street was paved with what seemed also to be a plastic, though of a porous structure. It stretched in a straight line in either direction as far as the eye could reach, with side streets meeting it at regular intervals. And without a break the strange, house-size boxes lined the street on both sides, each box separated from its neighbors by a gap of about three feet.

Vaguely Raff wondered if perhaps

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he were not still unconscious, and all this was a dream.

Experimentally he rapped against one of the walls. His sharp rapping gave back with a hollow sound. The cat, startled, dropped through his arms.

It didn't leap from his arms, but simply dropped through them. For an instant it was in the same space his arm occupied. Then it was landing gracefully on padded paws on the porous plastic pavement.

"Well," Raff said, frowning at the cat, "this box is hollow, from the sound. And if it's hollow there must be an opening someplace."

"Prrowrrr," it answered, giving him a knowing look.

IT WALKED up to the blank wall and looked back at him invitingly, then gave a graceful leap toward the smooth wall surface. Its head touched that surface and went out of sight, followed by the rest of its body. It was gone!

"Well, I'll be—" Raff said half humorously, scratching the back of his head.

Suddenly the cat appeared again, seeming to complete a leap begun on the other side of the wall, and landing gracefully on the street.

It licked its chops widely, then sat down and started to clean its whiskers with elaborate care, as if perhaps they had gotten a little of the wall plastic on them while passing through it.

Raff alternately studied the cat and the unbroken expanse of the wall. He was thinking, "Maybe there's something about the wall that makes it passable when you run and jump at it."

With this idea in mind he backed off a few steps and ran cautiously toward it, jumping and putting out his hands. He brought up with an abrupt jar against a very solid wall.

"Well," he said, picking himself up. "That's that."

"Mrrowrr?" the cat said consolingly.

"Yes," Raff said. "I hurt myself."

"Prrowrrr," the cat sympathized, cleaning its paws now with great care and concentration.

Raff turned his attention back to the cubicle again. There must be some way in, he reasoned. Perhaps there was an entrance in back. Of course! With a grunt of disgust at his former stupidity, he circled to the back. The cat followed, trotting occasionally to keep up with him.

In back the wall surface was even more devoid of any sign of ingress or egress than the front and side had been. Raff continued his circle until he was in front again. There had been absolutely no break in the continuity of the imperviousness of the supposed domicile.

He stopped in defeat, his eyes staring with brooding disgust down the deserted street. A sudden thought lit up his face.

"Of course!" he said aloud. "The air age must have set in so long ago that they always travel by air—and go inside from the roof! That explains the flat roof with no overhang."

But how to climb up? It was at least fifteen feet to the roof with nothing to hang onto to climb, and nothing laying around to use for a ladder—except the interior structure of the time sphere.

He examined the maze of wire and tubing with skepticism which soon changed to triumph. A half hour of hard work produced several skinned knuckles and a long, straight piece of tubing with a hook at one end to grab over the top of the box-like house.

A few moments later he was standing on the flat roof. It, too had no sign of any opening; and the roofs of the others that were the same

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height were equally devoid of openings.

He stamped with his feet. The roof gave back a hollow sound.

"Meaow!" It was a lonesome, almost demanding call from the street. Raff went to the edge of the roof and looked down at the cat with a comradely grin.

"If anybody's home in this piano box," he said cheerfully. "They must think I'm a persistent house-to-house salesman."

"Prrrow! the cat said soulfully.

From his high vantage point Raff surveyed the lifeless street and house-sized cubes. He could see at least a couple of miles in either direction, and it was all the same—and deserted.

He wondered if there were people. He wondered if perhaps the people were hiding from him—afraid of him. Maybe they were able to step through solid walls just as the cat had done so casually! That would account for the absence of doors.

But if that were so, why didn't people step out of the boxes? Why didn't they show up to welcome him—or fight him? A whole population couldn't be THAT afraid of one man!

A NEW PROBLEM was beginning to make itself felt. His stomach was telling him he needed food. His parched mouth was demanding water. He hadn't bothered to take food or water in the time sphere for the simple reason that he had expected to be back where and when he started in too short a time to need it. And in the back of his mind had been the feeling that if he weren't, he would be too dead to need such things.

"Well," he thought, giving the desert of plastic surrealist city a wry smile, "The inner man commands, and I must do something about it."

He lowered himself over the edge until he was hanging by his hands, and dropped. The cat, purring happily, proceeded to brush the bottom six inches of his trouser legs, its overheavy whiskers vibrating in harmony with its stiffly erect tail.

Taking out his pocket knife, Raff experimentally dug at the smooth wall of the cube. The stuff cut easily, though slowly. In half an hour he had carved a hole four inches in diameter to peek through.

Inside, the cube was unmistakably a house. The hole gave him a view of a room in which there was furniture that would have seemed quite ordinary in the past he had left.

Encouraged, he attacked the small opening with renewed energy. Inside would be food of some kind—if not human beings.

He found that by carving a small trench in the wall he could pull parts of it away. It was a little over an inch in thickness and without any weave of reinforcing metal to interfere with breaking in.

The cat, used to his jerky movements now, continued to purr and rub against him. Its loneliness or friendliness seemed to indicate it hadn't had human companionship for a long time. It didn't seem to have missed any meals, though, so that might be a wrong deduction.

Finally, with one finger bleeding profusely from a cut, Raff managed to squeeze through the hole and stand up inside. The cat disdained the hole he had worked so hard to make, and calmly hopped right through the solid part of the wall.

"Mrrowrr?" it said, looking up at him.

"Yes, I know how easy it is," Raff said. "For you."

The room he was in was dustless and with a newness about it. He wasted little time examining it, but began an exploration to see if he could find the icebox.

There were four rooms. The one he had entered first seemed obviously

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a living room. A second one was a sort of music room and record library, with an instrument whose only similarity to instruments he knew was its organ keyboard. The third room was a large bathroom with a wonderful bathtub in it.

Making a mental resolution to use it as soon as he had a bite of food, he went into the fourth room. In it were three thick—what seemed to be sponge rubber—beds, with no sheets or blankets on them.

"No kitchen!" he said, dismayed. The horrible possibility was dawning on him that maybe they had central kitchens or restaurants, and he would have to cut through another wall or several more before he found food.

"I'm so hungry I could eat cat food," he said, looking down at the cat which had followed him in his exploring.

"Prrrowrr," the cat said, going through the arch that led to the first room he had entered. He followed because he had been going to go there anyway.

THE CAT crossed the thick rug to a small cabinet. While Raff watched, the cat reached out a paw and pressed a red button in the cream yellow side of the cabinet. Instantly a dish of steaming cat food appeared on the floor.

"Hmm!" Raff said. He crossed over and examined the cabinet. There were other red studs. He pressed one. Nothing happened. He pressed each of the several dozen and nothing happened.

He started again, pressing each one. The cabinet groaned. One side split open. Underneath the top surface was a generous space filled with plates of steaming food of all descriptions, broken dishes, broken tumblers with liquids that smelled like various wines, and cups with steaming liquids in them.

He studied the mess and finally realized what had happened. Pressing a button brought a plate of food into the compartment—and he was supposed to have known that and reached through the plastic like the cat jumped through walls and brought it out!

He risked the broken glass and crockery and ate wholeheartedly.

"Why!" he thought. "It's been several million years! No wonder I'm hungry and thirsty!" He chuckled at the thought. He was feeling better now. And he knew he wouldn't starve. He could cut into another house and cut away the side of a cabinet and not make it burst its seams.

The cat had eaten too, and gained the energy to purr louder and rub against his trousers more energetically, which it was proceeding to do.

Raff went over to a large chair and relaxed. The cat jumped up on his lap and curled up to take a nap. He ruffled its neck fondly, and closed his eyes. An hour later he opened them again, refreshed by a short nap.

"Well, kitten," he said, standing up and letting the cat fall off his lap. "The next thing on the program is to find out where the folks went. Could the local theater have a bingo night tonight? And how do you recognize a theater when you see one in this town?"

"Prrrrrr," the cat said forgivingly, picking itself up off the rug and smoothing out its whiskers. After the whiskers were again spotless it walked regally across the rug toward the arch to the bedroom.

"Where you going now?" Raff asked good naturedly. He followed it. It crossed the bedroom to the bathroom, crossed the bathroom to a small hole in the corner, and squatted. He watched unbelieving as it straightened up, shortly, turned, and pressed a red stud in the wall. There was a sound of running water.

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The cat sniffed daintily and pressed the stud again. Finally it was satisfied.

"Ripley should hear of this," Raff muttered as the cat went past him to the living room again. He followed it, feeling slightly subdued. In the living room again he said, "Let's take a walk and see what we can scare up in the shape of people, kitten."

He started toward the opening in the outer wall. The cat, giving a "Meaow" of agreement, walked over to the wall and gave a gentle leap at it.

The next instant it was laying on the rug, unconscious. Its head had met the wall with a—not loud—but audible thud of solidity.

"Ha!" Raff chortled. "Got fooled, didn't you!" Then he realized the cat was really out and bent over and picked it up. It opened its eyes and struggled to get free.

HE LET IT escape to the floor, where it stood shaking its head in a bewildered, unbelieving fashion, for a minute. Then it walked over to the wall cautiously and touched it with a white paw, gently, experimentally.

"Wrrowrr," it wailed, turning its head and looking up at him. There seemed to be something allied to amazement and disbelief in its large green eyes.

"Well," Raff said, picking the cat up and dropping it onto the street through the hole. "Let's get out of here. I think the place is haunted anyway."

He started to poke his head into the opening in preparation to squeezing through when a strident bell sounded from someplace in the room. It caused him to jump.

"Here, kitty kitty kitty," he said, poking his head out. The cat looked suspiciously at the blank wall, then jumped through the hole. After it landed inside it looked back at the opening with obvious disgust on its face.

The bell rang again, the sound coming from the wall just to the right of the arch leading into the music room. Raff narrowed the sound down to one small part of the wall, but there wasn't the faintest sign of anything to cause it.

"Nuts!" he said loudly, exasperated.

"Wallow," the wall said softly.

"Huh?" Raff grunted. "Oh, I get it. A wall phone. Hello. Who's there?" He fixed his eyes eagerly on the space where the sound seemed to originate as if by staring he could see into the wall and along the invisible connection to the speaker. And then—

"Hello," the wall spoke in a different tone, very similar to his own. "I'm talking to you now through the robot translator. You're certainly an old duck, old boy. What's your name, flame?"

"Huh?" Raff grunted again. "I think your robot translator's got its wires crossed up."

"Oh, no," came the answer. "Your speech types you as twentieth century—definitely. Very few records of that period were preserved, but those few were preserved very accurately and are incorporated into the translator."

"How long ago was the twentieth century?" Raff asked eagerly.

"Don't you know? Bo?" the translator asked innocently. "You should. You just came from there!"

Raff gritted his teeth.

"Look," he said. "I ASKED you."

"Thirty million years ago," the answer came. "Do you know the principle of the machine you arrived in?"

"No," Raff replied.

"I thought not," the wall answered.

"What made you think so?" he asked sarcastically.

"Isn't it obvious?" came the reply. "If you did we would get it from you,

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and, having it shortly, we would travel everywhere in time, and would thus have it now. Since we don't have it now it's obvious you don't know it."

"Are all of you of this age wiseacres?" Raff asked.

"Sorry, sir," came the reply. "We don't mean to be, but our means of expression are slightly different, and on top of that the translator may word things differently than you like to hear them."

"That sounds plausible," Raff agreed suspiciously. "I'll let it pass. What's the matter with everybody? Why isn't there a welcoming committee or something? Why did everybody run away from me?"

"No one ran away," the wall said. "As a matter of fact, we are preparing a reception for you. At this moment a car is being built for you. The ordinary cars, of course, are utterly useless for you. You would have to use your knife to get in them. Believe me, we have been working ever since the instant of your arrival to prepare a proper reception for you. That's why you haven't seen any of us around."

"Oh," Raff said, considerably mollified. "Yes, I can see you would have to do that. I can't even get in a house here without knocking a hole in the wall."

"Unhandy for you," the wall said sympathetically. "But no doors or windows certainly keeps the dust out!"

"I can see that," Raff agreed. "Funny we didn't think of such a simple thing as that back in our day. By the way, when will this car be ready?"

"It's almost ready right now," came the answer. "That's why I called."

"Should I go out on the street and wait?" Raff asked eagerly.

"No," the wall hesitated in answering. "It would probably be less of a shock to you if you remained where you are until it gets there. Just a moment. I'll be back."

THERE WAS nearly five minutes of waiting. Raff picked up the cat which seemed to be in a blue funk. Finally the voice of the robot translator erupted again.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir," it said. "The preparations for your reception are completed now. In the upper part of the ship you will find conveniences and provisions to last out your lifetime. I'm sure you will be quite comfortable, sir. Thank you, and—bon voyage!"

"What are you talking about!" Raff demanded.

The wall remained silent. Raff stared at it angrily, then turned to the hole in the side of the house. As he walked across the room a sudden feeling of weight buckled his knees. It grew increasingly stronger, pressing him to the floor. Then, as abruptly, it departed.

Alarmed, he got up and ran to the hole and stuck his head out. The street and other cubes were unchanged—except that fifty yards either way on the street a vertical metal wall now rose upward.

His eyes followed this wall up and encountered a ceiling. It too was of metal.

He struggled through the hole onto the pavement. As he freed himself a strange feeling of weightlessness possessed him.

Fifty feet overhead was a circular opening that led up into darkness. He leaped, and it came down to meet him. He entered it and kept himself away from the walls until he came to a side outlet.

There were conventional doors here that opened and closed. Also there was a large transparent bubble he could look through.

He looked out. Far below was the Earth, filling half the sky, a giant sphere.

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a sound of running water.

* * *

The bulbous head was tipped back slightly to permit the eye stalks to turn upward and view the receding spaceship. Idly one of the eyestalks turned to look into the communication screen at the bulbous head staring out at it. The other eyestalk continued to watch the ship.

"There he goes," the watcher said. "That was certainly a close shave for humanity!"

"I'll say," the communicator loud speaker said. "In a way it's a dirty shame. He comes thirty million years from out of the past—a pioneer in time travel. And instead of getting the welcome he deserves we give him the runaround and stall him along—and then shoot him out into interstellar space."

"Yeah," the watcher said sympathetically. "But it had to be that way. Couldn't be any other way. Look what happened to the cat after awhile! That guy was just too radioactive!"

ROLLER THRILLERS

By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT

THE WORLD is full of big amusement parks whose names are famous—The Prater in Vienna, Coney Island, Riverview Park, and many others. In a way these parks are a projection of the human love for fantasy. The best example of this is of course, the roller coaster rides which thrill millions. The attitude of the patron seems to be, "Oh well, if we can't take a rocket to the moon, let's try the roller coaster—it's the next best thing!"

Roller coasters are interesting devices not only from the amusement standpoint but also from the attitude of the scientist for they are constructed on strictly scientific principles. Frequently you hear patrons of the ride say "boy, was that dangerous!" or "this Sky-Rocket is a lot more dangerous than the 'moon-rocket'!" Of course that isn't true. The rides are constructed with an enormous safety factor and are provided with every safety device known to the mechanical art. The trains which roar so thrillingly up and down the wood and metal hills are anchored to the rails with special underwheels. Every stress and every force has been allowed for so that no mishap can occur. Occasionally you hear of an accident where someone is hurt on such a ride. Nine times out of ten this is the passenger's fault for violating a safety measure. So far as is known, no real, serious mechanical disaster has ever occurred. The test is too rigid. The velocities and accelerations of the roller coaster rides seem enormous. They are high—sometimes sixty miles an hour—but they are never excessive. The wooden structure supporting the rails is more than strong enough to take anything. In fact, it is made of wood because of that material's resilience and spring. Proofed against rot, firmly braced, the wooden trestles are as sturdy as steel and a lot better for their purpose. So next time you take a ride don't worry about a thing; they're built with all the care that would go into the design of a rocket to the Moon!

* * *

GIVE ME PROOF!

By WILLIAM KARNEY

THE HARDEST thing on Earth is to prove something to anyone. Just listen to any argument. Facts are marshalled, authorities are quoted, statistics are cited, and a bewildering array of irrelevant material is introduced, no matter how trivial the point. At least this is the case in political, religious, legal and social matters, the exact points of which it is impossible to nail down. What a relief it is to turn to the exquisitely pure realms of pure logic where there is no speculation, where sheer reason holds sway.

These realms are primarily those of science and mathematics. In the deductive method of reasoning so widely used in science, vast numbers of facts and observations are assembled and from the similari-

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ties and dissimilarities in the facts and observations conclusions of a very general nature can be drawn. This is called deductive reasoning and the vast body of modern scientific knowledge rest upon it. So cleverly and skillfully have men robbed Nature of her facts that they are able to generalize in vast concepts, often calling these concepts, "Nature's Laws. The deductive method is a powerful system.

But it is coarse and crude compared with the subtle and refined *inductive* methods used in abstract logic and in mathematics. The extraordinary beauty of the inductive system lies in exact contradiction to the deductive system. In the latter we reason from fact—in quantity—to generalization. In the inductive system we thread our way from a few tenuous observations to vast generality. Actually in the deductive system we should have said we go from generality to the specific case, the opposite of the inductive.

In mathematics this system reaches magnificent heights. If we wish to prove a mathematical formula, say, for the sum of a certain series, we observe that the formula seems to work for a limited number of smaller cases. (Obtaining the formula in the first place is a matter of that divine gift, intuition). We say, let's assume the formula is true for the case, n equals k. If it is true then the formula ought to work for the case k plus one. We test it to see if it does. Presto!—it does.

We observe, that the formula held for k plus one. Therefore it must hold for k. Since we proved that it held for small values of k, we know that it must hold for any values of k! And that's all there is to mathematical induction!

That astonishing little idea is really important. We used it in its commonest mathematical sense but we did not have to. Many problems in symbolic logic are handled in the same way. Some people fail to see the beauty of inductive reasoning—this is simply a failure on their part to appreciate a charming subtlety. That is why the mathematically minded usually are able to see more abstruse arguments more easily. Practice has served as a wit sharpener, but even if you haven't ever seen a number you can still appreciate the method. It is a monument to human thinking!

* * *

ELECTRICAL JUNGLE

★ By A. MORRIS ★

SURVEY THE average residential district in a large city or even a small town which is within range of a television station and from roof-top height it will appear as a jungle of antennas and electrical wires. TV has caught such hold that we have been asked many times whether or not it is necessary to use an outdoor antenna on a television installation. If you are very near a transmitter, of course it is not. And even at some distance it isn't necessary to use an antenna.

On the other hand, almost invariably, in spite of all the indoor and built-in antennas in the world, an outdoor antenna is superior. It may not appear so at once to the eye, but it is unquestionably better. This should settle the matter for once and for all.

With ordinary radio and with ordinary FM people point out that external antennas are superfluous. This is untrue. Any radio of any kind will work better with an external antenna than without for the simple reason that the antenna is capable of picking up a stronger clearer, more powerful, less noise-smothered signal. This is a truism.

All a radio or TV set can do is to amplify a given electrical signal. Why not, therefore, give such a machine the best possible sort of input? That means an external antenna. No matter what anyone says, an outside aerial is best for any sort of wave reception—Q.E.D.!.

BOUNCING VIDEO

★ By CAL WEBB ★

RADIO AMATEURS are familiar with the fact that high frequency radio waves bounce and skip between the two boundaries of the Earth's surface and the ionosphere. In fact long distance transmission on low power would not exist if it were not for the fact that the radio wave may bounce between the two boundaries many many times. Ultimately it is received. That is why an amateur operator using a transmitter consisting of a single tube with an output of maybe six or seven watts, is able to contact Australia, halfway around the world!

When the frequency gets too high however, the radio waves are not reflected from the ionosphere but continue in a straight line—quasi-optically—until lost. This is the case with television. Hence the limited range of the video transmitter which can't be expected to transmit more than a hundred miles or so at the most. But every now and then, conditions are just exactly right for a reflection of the video wave to occur. Then some TV owner in New York is able to pick up a program from California, or an owner in Chicago receives one from a transmitter in Texas!

Fortunately this is rare and uncommon and it is not likely that many will be troubled very often with this phenomenon. The one incident that takes the cake however is when a New Yorker reported receiving a program broadcast by the BBC in London! The TV wave crossed the ocean!

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The COLUMN of LIFE

By LESTER BARCLAY

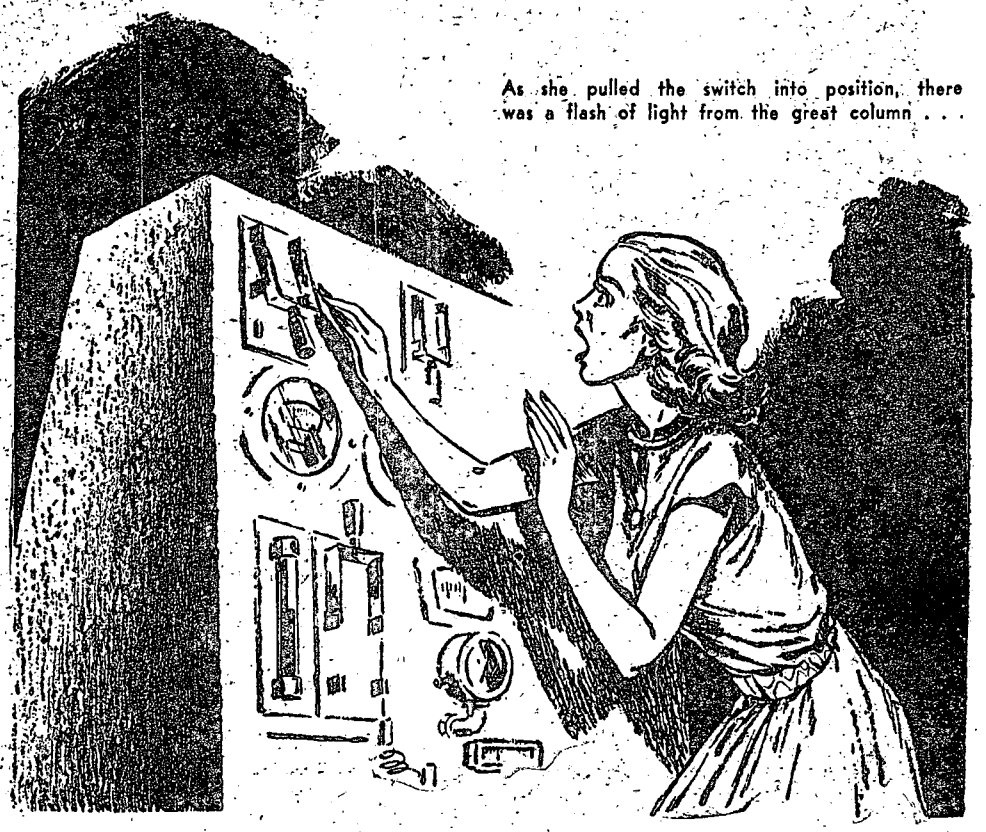
Who was this strange Hal Williams who used the dead in his search for the secret of life? Maryl knew she had to find out . . .

"I HATE HIM! God, how I hate him!"

Maryl Phillips felt a surge of pity for the girl who was pacing back and forth in the tiny room, from wall to wall. Jane Harms stopped her wild movement and faced her friend. "Oh, Maryl! What can I do?"

Maryl lay back on the Hollywood couch and looked up at the ceiling and thought, what the heck can I tell this girl? She's wildly in love, foolishly infatuated, I'd say, to a miserable creature of a man. But love being what it is, I've got to make with the sympathetic words.

"Now baby," she straightened and the sweater formed lovely curves in the right places. "If you'd stop getting yourself into these messes you wouldn't be crying your eyes out, and asking for help. But seeing that it's you and that it's the way you're built, I suppose, being your best friend, I



As she pulled the switch into position, there was a flash of light from the great column . . .

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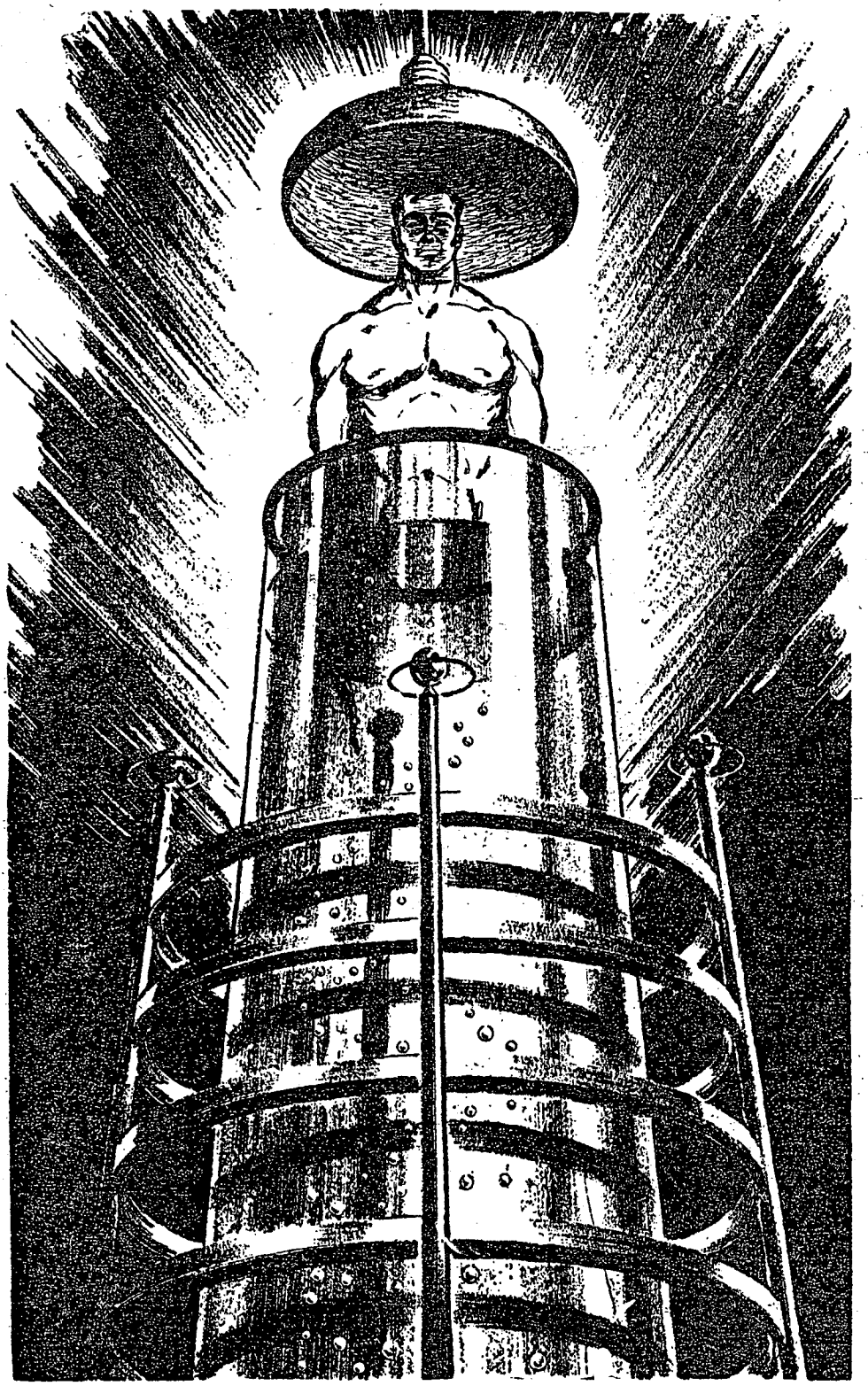

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must help as best I can."

The other girl suddenly threw herself across Maryl's knees and burst into a flood of tears.

Anger made tiny sparks show in Maryl's hazel eyes. She stroked the dark brown hair with one hand and held tight to the shoulder below.

"Plain Jane," Maryl said softly. "Just plain Jane. Never Jane of the sweet laughter or Jane of the true ways. Just *Plain Jane,* when it's a man.

"Well, baby! There's no sense in kidding yourself. Hal Williams is not worth the snap of your finger."

"Oh but he is!" Jane's tear-streaked face lifted for a moment. There was a look of blind devotion in her eyes. "Of course he is. It's just that I'm not good enough for him."

"And that's what he's got everyone believing. That he is a superior being," Maryl said...

HAL WILLIAMS walked on the tan bark with light-treading steps. His tall, well-knit body moved with a springiness which bespoke good condition. The various sounds of the circus, some loud, others muted, were all about him. He stopped before a barker who stood alongside a cage marked, "cashier". The high, oddly whining sound of the barker caught Hal's attention.

"So hurry, hurry, hurry, folks! The one and only Carabini is going to do his world-famous act in just fifteen minutes." The barker paused for a moment, his pale shallow eyes looking with intent at the crowd below him. "Yes, folks. The famous Carabini is going to be shot out of a cannon, the only man who never used a net, the only man who doesn't use any protection whatever. See it and thrill to it. See it and never forget it. Step this way folks. Tickets just fifty cents, half the price of a dollar half a buck..." His voice faded in the distance as Hal moved on.

Yes, Hal thought, Carabini's act was well worth seeing. He smiled at a new thought. Carabini was not going to be seen for long. But...Aah, well. The price one paid for fame was high and fame itself so fleeting. He stopped abruptly when he realized that he had come to the long row of tented dressing rooms. He turned in and walked to one about a quarter of the way down. He pulled the flap aside and walked in.

A man dressed in a skin-tight suit of treated cloth, cloth which held an odd sheen to it, turned at the sound of Hal's entrance. A pair of jet eyes flared in anger for an instant, then smiled in good humor. The lean narrow face relaxed from its lines of strain, as Carabini turned to stare into the mirror. And once more the comb began its rhythmic stroking.

"My frien', Meester Weeliams! So you 'ave come. Good! I am glad to see you... You 'ave the monee, no?"

"Of course, Carabini," Hal said, as he pulled a camp stool over and sat close to the side of the other. "Didn't I say I would?"

"Bot feeft thousan' dollars... Hah! Eet is enough to mek a man wonder. Only for so moch monee does the great Carabini theenk to retire."

"Not quite retire," Hal said easily. He crossed one leg over another, pulled a cigarette from a crumpled pack, and lit it. "Our agreement, you know..."

"A ceench! A bebee could do eet! Now you mus' escusa me. I weel see you after the act..."

Carabini made a final stroke with the comb, arose and nodded to the other, as Hal also stood. Carabini's eyes widened at sight of the thin packet of greenbacks which had suddenly appeared in Hal's left hand.

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"Fifty grand, pal. Fifty grand. All yours..." Hal reminded the other.

The frantic light which had suddenly come into Carabini's eyes at sight of the money was gone as quickly as it came to life. To another but Hal Williams it would have been mistaken for a shadow, the reflection of the electric bulb. But Williams interpreted it as he knew. And nodded in parting. Not even his eyes showed the smile that trembled in his heart.

THERE WAS the familiar roll of drums, the single bugle notes, and quiet, the stillness of expectant danger. As the man in the gleaming suit mounted the long ladder twenty thousand people held their breaths. And as he disappeared into the cannon's mouth tension rode the air. In thirty seconds he would appear again, this time projected in a large arc to land in a large tank of water a hundred feet away. That was Carabini's act. To be shot from a cannon into the tank, without the aid and use of protective covering of any kind.

Again there came the roll of the drums, higher and higher, to stop at a signal from the man at the cannon controls. The man bent, pressed at a button. There was a roar, a thunderclap of sound, and a man's body flew up and outward toward the tank filled with water a hundred feet away.

It was Carabini's last performance.

It was a science, this business of shooting a man into a tank of water. There had been others before Carabini who had done the same thing. But only he had forsaken the use of padding and headgear. It had always been a good act, though not as risky as the publicity men had led the public to believe. Still, there had always been risk. However, Carabini as well as others had practiced, first with dummies of their exact weight and later themselves, to perfect the arc they must describe. The secret lay in two things, the arc and a complete relaxation of muscles, so that when their bodies struck the water it was only as in a high dive. The velocity of the dive was higher because they were in actuality a projectile driven by explosives.

And tonight, for the first time in fifteen hundred performances, Carabini had made a mistake. There could be only one mistake in his business. He had come in too sharply. His body struck the high edge of the tank with a sickening thud...

HAL WILLIAMS whistled the lead tune from the hit show of Broadway as he strolled the darkened street. To either side shadowy warehouses lined the street. A fog shrouded the street lamps and lent a strange golden glow to the electric light. Now and then a figure appeared out of the mist, like a genie summoned by a magician, and disappeared as quickly.

His footsteps slowed as he approached his goal. It was a large greystone building and faded lettering stamped into the facade read: *County Morgue.*

A figure, faded as the building's stone, looked up from the ledger he was studying. He peered at Williams through steel-rimmed glasses and after a second or two recognized the other.

"Well, Mister Williams... Not another?"

"Yep," Williams said, leaning over the high desk front. "Carabini, the Human Projectile."

"Got the legal form?"

"I *always* have the legal form," Williams said. "Here 'tis."

"Uh huh! This one was in pretty bad shape. Heard he splattered his brains out against the side of the

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tank. Wish I'd been there to see it... Okay. I'll let the boys know. They'll be down in the usual time."

Williams nodded, stepped over to a phone booth along the wall and called a cab. He returned and looked over the headlines of the daily someone had left. The clerk busied himself in filing the application for removal of the dead which Williams had left with him. The application had been approved by the county court. The outside door opened, a head capped by a chauffeur's cap appeared in the crack and a rough voice asked who called the cab.

Williams walked over and stepped out and directed the driver to the rear where the body of Carabini the Human Projectile, wrapped in the beefcloth they used on corpses, lay on the platform, guarded by two attendants.

The two men carried the body over to the cab and placed it in the rear seat in a sitting position. Rigor Mortis was no longer present and the body slumped in the position it would have assumed were it alive.

Williams gave an address and the driver, after a look of repugnance at what sat beside his fare, turned and started off at a pace designed to get Williams to his destination in the quickest possible time.

IT WAS A street very much like the one the morgue was on. Warehouses, factories, and here and there a small store lined its two sides. The one-storied building before which the cab pulled up bore no sign of its use or purpose. Williams paid the driver, told him to wait and stepped up to the door. There was a metal knocker which acted in place of a bell. He twisted at it and a bell pealed distantly and after a very short wait two men stepped out. They were squat, muscular men, even in the all-encompassing coveralls they wore.

Without a word or sigh they stepped to the cab and lifted the corpse from the interior and carried it within the gloomy office. Williams followed shortly.

"...Carabini," Williams said laconically, as he made himself comfortable behind the desk.

He didn't bother looking after the two as they carried the corpse past the door between the office and what lay beyond. Williams knew they would place it in the refrigerator drawer, the same type the morgue used, marked, Carabini. His attention was already taken by the contents of a file he had pulled from one of the desk drawers.

The file read, "Carabini, Luigi. Italian descent. No living relatives. Perfect muscular reflexes. Age: thirty-nine; weight: one hundred fifty-four pounds; height: five feet eight inches. Excellent specimen."

"Number nine," Williams said aloud. "Now one more, a woman, of course. H'm. I wonder. Jane Harms...? Perhaps. Maryl Phillips would be the better specimen. We shall see..."

One of the two returned and stood on the threshold, head bowed as in prayer. There had not been the slightest sound of his entrance, yet Williams seemed perfectly aware of the silent presence.

"Yes—" he said without turning his head.

"It is in readiness, Master," came the gutteral reply.

"Very well..."

The door closed behind the coveralled figure without a sound.

Williams placed the file back in the drawer and followed the other to another door, this one open. Brilliant light reflected from white walls and ceiling. A vast battery of wall switch-

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es met the eye. They lined one whole wall. To Williams' left as he entered was a long row of odd-looking and complex machines of all sizes, some extending almost to the ceiling and others small as a typewriter stand. All were connected by cable to each other and many held in their complexity some sort of tube. There was a constant humming and buzzing in the room.

A half dozen of the coveralled, squat-shaped men were busy at the machines. Williams looked neither right or left as he marched down the center of the room. A massive column which resembled more the barrel of a large caliber cannon than any other thing, stood at the far end of the room. To one side some ten feet removed, was a wooden frame on which were a dozen or so dials. A maze of cables ran from the frame to the strange column. Topping the column was something which looked like a tin canopy, slightly conical in shape.

One of the coveralled figures sat on a small stool before the frame, his eyes intent on several of the dials.

"Jones' *batter* is ready for the mixing," he said.

"Good! I hope we get what we want this time," Williams said in a low voice. He did not speak to the man on the stool but rather to himself. "All right! Give it the full load!"

The man fiddled with two of the dials and after getting their pointers to where he wanted, turned a third all the way to the left. There was a sudden sharp sound, much like the scream of an animal, and every tube in every machine began to glow, each a different color. There was a wild hissing and sparking, a mad race of color in the tubes. Then the hissing stopped, the colors faded off to a milky substance, and the machines were again as they had been.

The only thing which moved was the needle of the largest dial. It began a steady beat, back and forth from the center marking, back and forth. The eyes of the two men were intent on the needle's fluctuation. And slowly the fluctuations became more regular and a ticking sound came to life, like that of a clock, or like a metallic heartbeat.

"Now!" Williams commanded.

And the squat shape reached forward and depressed the single switch on the entire board.

Williams looked up at the top of the column. And projecting from the mouth, completely nude to the waist, was the figure of a man. His eyes were closed and there was no sign of life. It stood away from the sides of the column, as if by some strange force...

"And another," Williams said. "But like the rest. Well. Carabini will be next. Give me a ring when the *batter* will be ready—"

He turned and went back to the office and through it to the fog-enshrouded night...

"YOU SEEM A bit subdued, chum," Maryl Phillips said.

Tom Holden tipped the half-filled glass of beer this way and that, catching different reflections of light each time the glass was tipped. He was a nice looking man of thirty-two, with regular features, the best of which were shrewd, honest eyes, and a strong chin and nose. He was a feature writer on one of the daily papers. And in love with the girl seated by his side.

He turned and gave her a crooked grin. "Well, it gets monotonous having someone ask how the *stiffs* are. But I suppose that's the penalty of having a father who is night man in charge of the county morgue. And of course there are the jokers who, on April first, always ask if I minded

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their calling my father to ask him if 'Myra Mains lived there'?"

"So what?" the girl said, and smiled with her eyes. "There are men who do stranger work, aren't there? Like the men who make a living writing the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. Besides, I think your father has a wonderful sense of humor, even if it's sometimes on the grotesque side."

Tom laughed and gulped the last of the beer. "Another?" he asked, looking at her empty glass.

"No. Let's walk. I like foggy nights. It makes the ordinary a little less so."

The park was a fairyland of strange shapes and shadows. They strolled arm in-arm in a silence which lasted until they found their favorite bench under the spreading branches of a giant elm.

"To get back to dad," Tom said. "Sometimes the damnedest things happen. As he says, who would buy the book he could write on it? No one but a moron. But me, I say that maybe the old man's wrong.

"For instance. There's the character who's been coming around now for the past two months. A man named, Hal Williams..."

"Hal Williams?" the girl said in startled tones. "Why I know him. Or rather, I have met him. He's that character Jane Harms is mad over. What does he have to do with what goes on at the County Morgue?"

"You mean you know this guy?" Tom asked. "Say! Maybe we can work something out!"

She was curious. "How do you mean, *we?*"

He spread his arms wide, as if her question was needless. "Jane. Find out what goes with this character. Do you know that he has had authorization for the removal of nine bodies from the morgue? Why? What does he do with them? Who is he? Where does he come from?"

"If you can wait a minute or so I'll call Winchell. He'll know, I'm sure," she was low-voiced, but perhaps a little caustic. "As for prying into my best friend's affairs, Tom Holden, you'd better get another pigeon."

"Why the fuss, honey," Tom was hurt by her words. "You've mentioned more than once that you wished Jane would find another romance. That this one was taking too much out of you. So why the sudden change of heart? Hey! Don't tell me that the handsome and charming Williams made a conquest out of you...?"

She had pretended anger before. It was no longer pretense. "I don't like that! Not a single bit! What's more I *don't* have to listen to it. Goodbye!"

"Aw, honey..." Holden wailed, realizing he *had* put his foot in it. "Now don't get mad."

But she was already a dim shape in the fog. Her voice came back to him, as if borne on the wings of the fog, "You're the newshawk. Why don't *you* fly away...?"

Her anger abated after a while and she became conscious of how ridiculous the whole thing had been. Childish, she snapped at herself. Why, they considered themselves grown people. H'm. But pride forced her to continue on the path she had chosen. And besides, she smiled at the thought, it didn't hurt to put Tom in his place once in a while.

The sound of an approaching trolley made her look up. She realized she had walked out of the park, and that the night was still young. What to do, where to go? H'm! Jane Harms! She lived a couple of blocks off of the park. Perhaps she would be home...

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HAL WILLIAMS was outstretched full-length on one of the Hollywood couches. A bowl of fruit at his side, he was munching on an apple which Jane had obligingly peeled for him. His jacket was thrown across the arms of the chair she was sitting on, facing him. A quivering smile came and went on her lips. She looked more as if she were going to burst into tears than laughter.

"...So, really, Jane dear," Williams was saying, "There is absolutely no reason why you shouldn't do as I ask. Is there?"

"Hal!" she shuddered violently and his eyes clouded at sight of it. "How can you be so, so morbid? Why I have never thought of death before. But this talk of yours, this *favor* you want done. It's—bizzare would be a mild word for it.

"I have denied you so little, have asked for so little. Why can't you even pretend, though that's surely a rotten way of doing it, pretend that there is a spark of liking for me? It's as if you come here but for the sole purpose of taunting me, of tearing me to bits, just to see what makes me tick. And now tonight..."

Williams took a bite out of the apple just to hide the yawn. She *was* being difficult. And in a way he hadn't thought she would be. Well, he would get over *that* hurdle. He came to a sitting position and asked her to come to him with a movement of his fingers. His strange brooding eyes seemed to call in a command she found it impossible to ignore. She came to him and he moved over so that she could sit by his side. He took her in his arms and kissed her. It was their first kiss.

She was being whirled in a purple mist. Fire beat at her breast. Her lips were parched, yet she did not want him to stop. It was a something she had desired of him during all the past months. She fell back on the couch and he bent over her, his eyes, lances of flame probing her soul.

"Like a flame which burned the soul from me," he said in soft accents. "It is as if the shadowed flower became touched with the immortal fire of the sun. Jane..." He pronounced her name as if in worship.

He lowered his head as if he was frightened of what he had said, but actually it was only to hide another yawn. He was very sleepy. And what he had in mind to do had to be done very soon. Time was running out for him.

Her eyes were closed. She was storing in her mind the never-to-be forgotten moment which had just transpired. She had been kissed before, caressed before, but never as Hal, sweet Hal, wonderful Hal, had done it. Her fingers marched up the keys of the gay, couch spread until they touched his. She was so lost she did not feel their cold, their oddly clammy touch.

"Oh, my darling!" her tremulous voice was a benediction. "I never knew... You never let me know! But now—"

He bent and kissed her again. Twin tears rolled down her cheeks. Her eyes remained closed. "How could I have questioned you?" she berated herself aloud, grovelled with words of abasement. "Whatever my true heart desires. Let him but ask—"

HIS SIGH of triumph escaped in a soft breath. Done! Finished! All but the mixing. And that would take place soon. But first the small formalities...

Yet he knew better than to run. We must still walk with careful steps, he thought. She is like the foolish bird, yet even the most foolish bird fears the cat.

"Dear Jane," he said, "I must have hurt you deeply with those words I

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used. "Yet I could not help..." his words trailed off and he turned his head to one side.

She sat up quickly, her eyes bright with alarm. "I knew it! I *knew* it!" She was frightened. "Something is wrong. What is it? Tell me? I won't sleep, eat, live, unless I know!"

His words were acted out with histrionics worthy of the greatest of the thespians. As he spoke, his body drooped in a terrible resignation, his hands fluttered, clenched into fists which pounded the spread in futility, his eyes were now wide in terror, now closed in concentration. Now and then he swayed as if in supplication, and she was the living shrine of his prayers.

"I was afraid," he began. "But how could I allow you to see that fear? But now I am no longer afraid. You have given me hope. How can I tell you, how can I make plain the terrible thing of which I must speak? No..." he stopped her as she started to speak. "Let me finish. I will try to make it plain. I am..."

They both turned startled eyes to the door. There had been a knock. Now another, this one sharper, more persistent, and with it a voice:

"...Jane! Hey, Jane...!"

They recognized it. Maryl Phillips. Hal Williams growled an unintelligible something and his eyes became sharp in anger.

"Oh, Hal," Jane whispered. "I won't answer."

But Hal recognized the possible danger of that. Maryl had probably seen the light from without and had come up.

"Let her in," he said.

MARYL'S eyes widened, then narrowed in a smile. She hadn't expected Williams to be there. But, it was just as well. She was determined, of a sudden, to see how well he could be dug.

"Hi, Jane... I didn't mean to break in this way. But I saw the light—"

"Oh, it's all right, Maryl. Hal and I were just talking."

"Swell. I mean I'm glad I came over, then. So foggy out, it makes me want company and Tom was tied up with some silly chase he's on. Something about a character who's been using the morgue... But what the heck am I bringing that up for? I came here to get away from gloomy things. What's new Jane...Hal?"

She had seen the glow on Jane's cheeks, had guessed at its reason and felt that she had intruded on something. Perhaps something which made her an undesirable. Maybe Hal Williams had acted as Jane had wanted him to? This dancing light in Jane's eyes. It could mean that. And that glower deep within the black ones of Williams.

"Oh," Jane said. "Nothing new! I'm still working with that new man on that life-substance, as he calls it. Interesting, but it knocks me out. I have an idea he's on the wrong track, but what the heck! I'm his assistant, not his superior."

Now Williams was glad he *had* decided to stop by on his way from the office. He knew something of what Jane had been doing. But this life-substance thing. That was the first he had ever heard it mentioned.

Maryl walked to the small kitchen. Jane always had a few bottles of beer in the refrigerator. Her voice came to them, muted by the drapes which acted as a partition between the two rooms:

"Anything new on that, baby?"

Jane's fingers closed around those of Williams' in a fiercely possessive grip. He returned the pressure as if by instinct. He wanted to hear more of this thing Jane was doing. Those words, "life substance" made him ter-

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ribly anxious for more information. Jane might prove to be the greatest of his treasures...

"There would be, if I had my way," Jane replied.

"What do you mean?" Williams asked.

Maryl appeared carrying a tray on which were three bottles of beer and three glasses. She placed the tray on a stool. Jane got up, took the bowl of fruit away and placed the tray close to Williams' side. Then she drained the contents of the small bottle into a glass and brought the glass to Maryl, who had found the deep lounge chair more comfortable than the straight-backed kitchen chairs.

"Well, you know....but of course you don't! Funny. But we've never talked of my work, have we, Hal?"

"You never had a chance," Maryl said, grinning. "He's always done the talking. But I must confess, interestingly."

"Thank you, Miss Phillips!" Williams said. "I *do* love to talk. And I *am* rude. But there are so few people who *say* anything. I do!"

IT LOOKED like the start of something unpleasant. Jane broke in quickly:

"I thought *I* was going to do the talking? Well, then... Since the Goggleheim Foundation gave me that grant for the paper I wrote on the distinct possibility of reincarnation, I worked with Doctor Hector, the world famous biochemist. Then he left for a prolonged stay in England and this new man, Jonian, a Frenchman, took over. Hector had left me pretty much to my own devices and allowed me pretty much my own latitude. Not Jonian. I had to work with him or not at all.

"I had no choice. So I've been working with him. And that's what my work has been. The search for the substance Jonian calls, the 'life substance'."

"And have you found it?" Williams asked.

Maryl threw him a quick glance of wonder. The man seemed to be on fire. His eyes burned with a positively frantic light, his nostrils distended as though in anger, his whole being seemed poised for instant action.

"No! But I think I am on the right track," Jane said matter-of-factly.

Williams shot to his feet as though he'd been driven by a catapult. He whirled, took Jane's hands in his own and said fiercely:

"What is it? Tell me!"

"*Hal!* Don't! You're hurting me!"

"I-I'm sorry," he said quickly. "Strange. But I too am interested in reincarnation. To think of all these months we have spent together and you doing research in it and we have never spoken of your career. Incredible!"

"Not so," Maryl pointed out as she filled Jane's and her own glass. "You never gave her a chance. Seems like, if I remember right, you never spoke of what you did, altogether. First I've heard that you were interested in anything except yourself."

"Yes, I am," he said, controlling his voice with an obvious effort. "Always have been. Uh, some day, Jane, and I hope soon, I'd like to have you come to my place and show you what I've done in that line."

"Hey! How about me?" Maryl asked.

He threw her an oblique glance. She felt an icy something suddenly pass down the length of her spine at that strange look. She would have sworn she read his mind. And his mind said, *how I'd love to have you come over...*

"But of course," he said. "When Jane comes, you be sure and come along. Now, Jane, Maryl, I've stayed

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as long as I could. Been too long without enough sleep. But tonight I will make up for the loss of it. Jane. It's with sincere thanks to you I say that. You were responsible..."

"For the lack of sleep?" Maryl asked.

"No. For depth in which I'll lose myself in it tonight."

TOM HOLDEN gulped the last of the beer and looked sidewise at the girl at his side. "So that's what the big deal is, reincarnation? Sounds goofy to me."

"It's even goofier, Tom," Maryl said. "I never paid too much attention to what Jane talks about. Mostly it's over my head. What the heck do I know about biochemistry? And don't give me a lecture on it now. Let me finish.

"He acted like a wild man when she mentioned what she was doing. It was absolutely fantastic, his actions. He frightened me, Tom. You know I don't scare easy."

"You don't scare at all," Tom said bluntly. He heaved a sigh. "Think he's one of these crackpots who might try an experiment, using the dead?"

She shrugged her shoulders. He went on: "Lucky my dad is the caretaker. Which allows me to pry where others can't. Funny thing about all those stiffs Williams gets. Not a single one has any known living relative. Not a single one whose death might be questioned, or body claimed.

"There have been nine people, eight men and a woman. I won't name them; take too long. But though I know their names and what they did I can't make any sense out of it. For example, the last was a man known as Carabini, the Human Projectile. A circus man. One of those goons who gets shot out a cannon and into a tank of water. So he missed and gets his brains knocked out on the tank wall. Now what the heck would Williams want with a corpse like that?"

Maryl's eyes shadowed in thought. It was a proper question. If, as Williams claimed, he was interested in reincarnation, and he used the corpses of these people in whatever horror he did, what could he want with someone like Carabini? She had no answer.

"By the way, chicken when do you and Jane have this date with Williams the Ghoul?" Tom asked.

"Tomorrow night. Williams will pick us up at Jane's."

"I'll be there, too," Tom said. "Parked a half block down, where he couldn't possibly spot me. And I'll be right behind all the way. I don't like the sound of this character, or the work he's doing. What's more I'm bringing a gun along... Just in case."

"My hero!" she threw her head back and spread her arms. "Always playing the lead in the movie about newspapermen. Why don't you be your sweet, sensible self, and just don't worry those curly locks about your Maryl and her friend. We'll be okay. Williams is not a fool. Besides, he works with the dead, not the living."

"That's just what I mean," Tom said darkly.

"I felt the same way last night, Tom, while he was talking. But that was last night."

"So tonight I feel that way," he said.

It was the start of another argument. And for the second time in two nights, Maryl left him on a note of anger and frustration. Only this night she went directly home...

"DAMN IT!" Williams exploded. "The same as the others!"

"Yes, Master," the figure at the board said, as he switched off the current.

"She'd better have what I want,"

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Williams growled. Suddenly an idea struck him. He realized that it had been at the back of his mind since the night before. Maryl had mentioned something which had to do with him. Someone she knew had been checking on him, had told her, and she in her idiot's way, had tried to draw him out. He snapped his fingers. Of course!

He whirled and moved swiftly back to the inner office. He lifted the phone from its cradle and dialed a number. His eyes lit at the sound of the familiar voice.

"Jane! Aah! Jane, my darling. I have been thinking of you all this night. Look, Jane... No, nothing is wrong... Believe me! It's just that I'm all upset. Tell me, dearest, are you free tonight?"

He smiled at her quick reply. "Then come over. I'll phone for a cab to pick you up. Will you? Sweet Jane..." He waited with impatience for her to finish telling how little trouble it was. "Just one thing more, dear. Get Maryl to come along for company. See if she's home. Yes, I'll wait for your return call before I get the cab—"

He leaned back and stared blindly toward the ceiling fixture, his fingertips tapping one against the other, in a sort of rhythm for his mood. He did not have to wait long for her call. His, "Hello," was rather sharp but Jane at the other end was oblivious to anything but the fact that he had called her. The first time.

He smiled in quiet satisfaction as he nodded his head to her words. "...You *are* wonderful, my dear," he broke in, his tones honey-sweet again. "Now I'll call the cab and very soon will see my dearest."

He pressed a buzzer at the side of the desk and one of the squat automatons appeared a moment later.

"Prepare the *batter* vats for two," he said.

There was the usual obeisance before his words, and the low-voiced acceptance, "Yes, Master," and the figure disappeared into the gloom beyond.

MARYL placed the phone back on its cradle and just stood in a reflective silence for a moment or two, wondering about this call. She had barely got her coat off when the phone had rung. It had been Jane, her voice quivering in ill-repressed excitement. Hal Williams had called! Had wanted her to come to his place. Further, he wanted her to bring Maryl along for company. Jane hadn't talked long, just enough to beg Maryl to come, and to mention that she thought the talk of the night before had been the factor of this call from Williams, and beneath the surface, Maryl could feel that the real reason for Jane's wild desire to go was what had happened between the two before she appeared on the scene.

Maryl had felt from the very instant of her arrival that she was in the role of interloper.

She had left Tom in one of her angry fluffs. Of a sudden she felt she had to tell him of this change in plans. She lifted the phone and dialed the number of the tavern they frequented, close to the newspaper offices.

Tom had just left, the bartender said. No, he didn't know if he was coming back. And yes, he would leave the message... Oh, Maryl didn't know the address. But he would say she called and tell Tom they were going to Williams' place...

She looked at her hand as she placed the phone on its cradle once again. There had been a tremor in the fingers. She searched her heart and knew there was fear in it. She bit her lip and stepped to the closet where

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she hung her coat. The light was still on and as she reached to pull the swagger coat from its hangar her eyes went up to the shelf above. They went wide in remembrance. Once, several months before, there had been a series of alarms about a burglar in the neighborhood. Tom had brought her a short-barreled pistol and had asked her to keep it somewhere in the apartment for self-protection.

She had seen the pistol grip just below one of her hat boxes. It fitted without too much bulkiness into one of the wide pockets of the swagger coat. Just as she came back to the small living room of her apartment Jane announced her arrival with a knock at the door.

HAL WILLIAMS opened the door, made a mock bow to the girls, and excused himself to pay the driver of their cab. He returned and took each girl by an arm and steered them into the room beyond the office.

"Doctor Williams boogy-man's parlor," he said jokingly. "This is the room where the bodies are kept."

Jane grinned at his remarks, but Maryl could feel nothing but horror. It was as if she felt the truth behind the words.

Jane's breath caught in wonder as she saw the huge machines, the retorts with the maze of wires and tubes radiating from them. Then her eyes went to the column at the far end of the room. She turned to Williams and asked:

"What's that, Hal? Looks like a cannon."

"In effect it is," he said, turning serious. "But it doesn't do what I want it to. Stubborn sort of thing."

"The recalcitrant column, eh?" Jane said.

He looked at her in sudden appreciativeness. The girl had a humor of sorts. A side he hadn't known about her. Well, too bad. There just wasn't time to cultivate that side.

"That's why you're here tonight, Jane," he said. "Maryl, would you excuse us? I'm sure what we have to discuss will be over your head. Look around. Some of this stuff will amuse you."

"Not me," Maryl said. "This place gives me the shivers. Looks like a witch-doctor's dream house. No, thanks. I'll follow you two around. Feel safer that way."

"As you wish," he said in dismissal, as if he no longer cared. "First, my files... That's right," he said to one of the coveralled figures who had suddenly appeared rolling the cabinet which contained the files of the nine people. "And now—"

Maryl had done a double-take at sight of the squat man. She wondered how he knew of Williams' desire. Mental telepathy? But she had to keep silent. Jane and Williams were engrossed in what he was showing her.

"...The last was Carabini," Williams said, and Maryl realized she was listening to the last of the names. "He, as the others, was a perfect specimen. Now come along, girls, and I'll show you what the column does, or is supposed to do."

They watched in breathless interest as the dial swung widely back and forth and settled slower and slower to the middle, and finally rested there. They saw the shape at the board flick the switch, heard the crackle of tubes glowing, saw the brilliant lights, and after a second or two saw the shape of a man appear in the column, hanging as if by magic.

Maryl barely repressed a scream. But Jane only narrowed her eyes and studied the figure with care.

"Now who is that?" Jane asked quietly.

"Carabini," Williams replied. "It

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actually is Julius Caesar. But he is dead!" There was a cold anger, a wild viciousness in Williams' voice.

"The woman...?" Jane asked another question, her eyes still on the figure suspended in mid-air.

"Marie Antoinette," Williams said. "She was a strip dancer, named Haggerty, who went under the name of Florette. Same dimensions, in every way, as Marie Antoinette. Dead, like the rest!"

Williams had underestimated Maryl's understanding. She had quickly added two and two together and got a fairly good answer. Just some of the details which had to be added and she would have at least what Williams was trying to do.

"This, of course, is the finished product," Jane said. "How do you manage the transfiguration?"

"Come along," Williams said. "My *batter* room..."

MARYL'S face felt sudden heat. She gulped audibly, repressing the gag which preceded nausea. This room Williams had brought them to. It was like the back room of a butcher shop which slaughtered its own meat. The same kind of wooden blocks on which meat was cut up. These were larger, however, and narrower. Various knives and saws hung neatly arrayed, hanging from hooks on the wall. The place had a hospital's cleanliness about it. At the far end of the room was an immense vat and close to it what appeared to be a meat grinder, but the largest by far Maryl had ever seen.

She guessed at what went into it and felt another surge of nausea.

Jane and Williams had been talking quietly to one side while Maryl engrossed herself in the grisly exhibits. She caught the tail end of something Jane was saying:

"...I see. Well, of course reincarnation is possible with control. But it has always been my opinion that the man who achieves it artificially must find the catalyst which will bring the forces of soul-to-life together. You haven't—"

Williams slapped a fist into a palm.

"No, damn it, I haven't. Centuries have passed. They called me a wizard, sorcerer, magician. Merlin, Cagliostro... I had several bodies. But always failure in my attempts to manufacture a reincarnated person. I have spent fortunes, have killed men and women, have bribed palace guards and eunuchs, have overthrown kingdoms and empires, and in the end I must admit failure.

"Now, perhaps now, there is a possibility, with your help?"

Maryl moved to where the two were standing. They didn't even notice her presence. Jane was looking up at the handsome, evil face above her's. She smiled thinly.

"Yes," she said. "Modern science may have it in its power to do what you have tried by sorcery and alchemy. Perhaps I *can* help! But first one question. Why do you want to bring back to another life, the dead of the past?"

For the first time Williams gave the wrong answer. "Then the power of the Universe will be mine!" he said fiercely. "*I* will be the true *Master!* They will call me Lucifer, evil, the arch-destroyer, but the world will be mine..."

"You monster...you devil!" Maryl yelled in sudden horror at the full meaning of his words.

He turned and seeing the look in her eyes, dealt her a vicious slap across the cheek, sending her reeling. In a flash he was on her and this time his fist was closed. Blessed unconsciousness blanketed her the instant his fist crashed against the side of her jaw.

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Williams pivoted and stalked forward toward Jane. There was a look of utter madness in his eyes. His mouth was twisted in a derisive grin.

She stood erect and slim, her breasts pounding wildly, heaving against the sweater. Fire seemed to leap from her eyes. She had always been plain Jane, but in this moment she was transfigured into a Joan, a Joan of Arc! She waited his coming with an inner calm that took his admiration. But only momentarily. She possessed the secret; he was sure of it, and she would disgorge it or suffer as none of the others had. For they had been dead before their bodies were dismembered.

He stood before her, head bent, shoulders hunched, hands outstretched. "There it is," he said. "The mold from which the dead will return. First I grind their bodies up, and after my minions pack it into the mould I take it to the column and into the breech. You will be the first who will go into the mold, *alive*...."

"Alive or dead," she said, "the secret will remain with me—"

HE LAUGHED wildly and called in sibilant tones. The six squat figures came running into the room. He motioned toward Jane. They fell on her and in a matter of seconds, she hung suspended by thongs from a pair of hooks, like a calf ready for dressing.

"My patience is at an end," he said. "Time is running out too swiftly. Tell me! What is the 'life substance' of which you spoke?"

Her mouth was a thin, bloodless line. Her eyes braved the madness of his and dared him to do his worst.

His index finger hooked downward and two of the coveralled men took knives from the wall and stepped forward and slit down sharply at her. Her clothes fell stripped from her.

"The first cut... The next is the flesh..."

Her head moved back and forth in denial of his purpose.

"First an arm, then the other, and next a leg... And always the tourniquet at the dismembered portion; you will be kept alive to feel the pain. Talk, woman!"

"Never! Death will seal my lips."

And once more his finger hooked downward. And once more the two monstrous figures stepped forward, knives pointed at the white flesh. Jane's eyes went wide and then closed in a faint.

The two looked at their master. Down went the hooked finger and once more they started to use their blades. But they didn't quite reach the flesh. Two shots rang out. Both men fell face forward to the floor. It was strange that though the bullets had smashed through the backs of their heads not a drop of blood showed.

Williams whirled at the double sound. Maryl was seated on the floor, a pistol in her hand. Smoke still curled idly from the mouth of it. And in rapid succession came four more shots. Williams looked idly about. They were all dead, his wonderful slaves, dead in the flesh as they had been in their minds and souls.

He moved toward her with slow steps. Maryl's head and body swayed in an odd rhythm as she watched him approach. The gun came up in a point, straight for his breast. And slowly, with infinite care, as though she wanted to make certain that she could not miss, she pulled the trigger.

Again and again she pulled at it. Then realization came to her. The gun held but six cartridges. She had used the last on Williams' slaves!

She got to her knees, to her feet just in time to meet his rush. She

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fought while he tried to bend her back, his fingers tearing at her clothes. Her knee came up as he bent her back and caught him in the groin. He doubled up in pain and she tore herself from his grip and ran for the inner office. He was after her in an instant and caught her at the threshold. Once more the struggle began. Time after time he struck at her with doubled fist, and time after time, somehow, she managed to evade the blows.

Suddenly, he changed his tactics. Holding her so that escape was impossible, he dragged her backward, her heels trying to get a grab on something, her whole body resisting him, toward the greyish human mold near the door leading to the laboratory. Their breath was coming in quick sharp gasps. But he was the stronger and slowly she was being dragged to his goal. And then he was before it, but with his back turned to it. She took one look at the grisly thing and with a movement born of despair, pushed wildly at him.

For an instant he was off balance, and in that instant took a backward step to regain it. But that step caught his heel in the body of one of the coveralled figures, and Williams stumbled to land full in the coffin-like mold. And like a flash, Maryl was at the hinged cover, slamming it down and locking the latch.

A STRANGE madness possessed Maryl. She could hear Jane shouting wildly from where she hung suspended. But it simply did not register. It was as if she no longer had her own mind. Something kept pounding at her brain; *"You must get his body into the breech... You must get his body into the breech!"*

There were rollers under the stone form. Somehow she managed to get the rollers under it. It was not so hard then to manage it. The lights were still on in the laboratory. She shoved at the thing until it stood at the side of the column. Then she ran back to the other room and got Jane down. She slipped her coat over the shoulders of the naked girl and buttoned it close about her. Then taking her arm, Maryl ran back to where the mold lay.

"The breech!" she said firecely. "We've got to get it into the breech!"

"Upend it," Jane said, with the same fierceness, as if she too had become infected with the same virus as Maryl. "The breech opens lengthwise. See..." She had snapped a trigger-like affair to one side and the breech opened neatly in two halves. In a matter of seconds they forced the stone coffin forward by combining their strengths, and in an instant the steel breech clanged shut on it.

"Watch that center dial," Jane said as she stood to one side. "When it stands still at the middle, press the switch closed."

Maryl's blonde hair was a tumbled mass as she knelt at the board. Jane's memory was wondrously retentive. She never forgot anything. And, as if it were Williams' himself directing, she gave the orders. Once more the tubes lit up, grew milky, crackling sounds exploded in the air and the needle began its wild swinging movement, and slowly, moved less and less from the median line. And after a second or two, the needle stopped altogether.

"Now!" Jane commanded sharply.

Maryl flicked the switch closed. And both girls looked up to the canopied top. Nothing. But only for a second. Then the nude to the waist figure of Hal Williams showed. His eyes were open as was his mouth. His lips grimaced in strange mouthings, but nothing came out. His eyes were wide in horror. Then, with a swift-

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ness that was impossible to see, a transformation took place. Instead of the half-nude figure of a man, the writhing half of a serpent showed....

They screamed aloud, and scrambled away from the diabolic machine in frantic haste. And Jane, in her anxiety to escape, tripped over one of the cables, pulling it from its socket. It snapped away and struck a tube. There was a short burst of flame, an explosion, and a great gush of larger flame, as something caught fire.

But the girls were already through the door and fleeing the outer door. Just in time. There were greater explosions, a series of them, and suddenly a great sheet of flame made sun-bright the whole interior.

And from the interior of a car which came to a skidding halt, came a frightened voice:

"Jane! Maryl! I've found you!"

TOM HOLDEN took both girls into the shelter of his arms and watched the terrible fire. It seemed to him he had never seen a fire which spread with such wild ferocity before. In a matter of minutes there was nothing but embers. The roof caved in as did the walls, long before the first fire truck pulled up.

...Tom made coffee for the three, while Jane and Maryl lay back, exhausted from their ordeal. He returned and forced them to drink the steaming brew. And after a while they told him what had happened. His face was as pale and drawn as theirs when they were done.

"I can't print that!" he said. "No one would believe it. Reincarnation, serpents, Cagliostro, a man who revived the dead. They'd call me crazy."

"And yet," Jane said, closing her eyes in the pain of a lost love, as she saw Tom's arms take Maryl about her shoulders and draw her close, "it was the truth! He made but a single mistake. He used the dead. The living alone hold the 'life substance'.

"He was so careful. He knew the measurements of all the great of the past, found those of the present whose measurements were the same. Oh, he was a devil, all right. He made sure that no one could trace them to him. And always, these poor fools he used, always they had an incurable disease, or something which forced them to accept his terms. Like Carabini. He had cancer. So he was bribed with fifty thousand dollars. But first Williams made sure that on the last night Carabini would be nervous. He was and died. So with the others."

"But what was he?" Tom asked.

"I—I don't know," Jane said, with eyes still closed. Twin tears stole down her cheeks. "I don't know. But I think he was that angel that fell in the long ago. Lucifer."

Hers was the lost love. But Maryl and Tom knew only that they had found theirs...

A NEW "CRT"

By LEE OWENS

THE ABBREVIATION "CRT" is becoming as well known as O.K. It is the name of the all-important tube in television—the "Cathode Ray Tube". And it's getting better all the time.

New tubes of all sorts, radio, television and radar, are popping forth faster than rabbits. It's a healthy sign too. It shows the engineers are on the job. They've come up with a new cathode ray tube which

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will make television better to look at.

As we all know, the picture on the TV tube is produced by a beam of electrons striking a fluorescent material causing it to give off light. Now while the pencil beam of electrons is small, it has an appreciable cross sectional area. When it strikes the fluorescent screen a large amount of light is given off. Ideally this light should radiate outward to the onlooker. But the beam is striking from the rear and a lot of light is emitted in all directions. This has the undesirable property of making the area around the beam of electrons rather large and blurry. The result is that the picture is "fuzzy". Exact focus and clarity cannot be obtained unless some of this unwanted light is eliminated.

Well the answer has been found. All the technicians do is cover the inside back of the fluorescent screen with a very thin layer of aluminum. This aluminum is a good reflector. When the light tries to go back into the tube it is reflected in the opposite direction. The result is a clear picture. The aluminum film is so thin that it offers no opposition to the beam of electrons. An excellent accomplishment!

The process of putting the aluminum on the fluorescent screen is ingenious too. It is put on exactly as is done in aluminizing mirrors such as those in telescopes and headlamps. A small piece of aluminum is vaporized by a tungsten filament or an induction heater. The aluminum flashes into vapor and settles on the suitably available surfaces, not harming those masked.

In addition, it can be noted that CRTs are being rapidly reduced in price as mass production goes into operation. While they will always be considerably more than ordinary small little radio tubes, they are coming into a reasonable price range.

We're told that another million and a half sets will be sold before the year is over! It won't be long before everyone in the country is completely sold and completely conscious of the outstanding electronic miracle of the age!

ROCKET SOCIETY

★ By J. R. MARKS ★

IT HAS been recently announced that there is in process the formation of the new German Interplanetary Society, modeled in some respects after the old German Society of Inplanetary Space Travel. The announcement comes from a number of eminent professors of rocket engineering in the British and the American zones of occupied Germany.

The announcement says that the society hopes to continue the great research which unfortunately degenerated into such a terrible weapon in the hands of the Nazis. The members of the society are not amateurs but are mostly experts who have spent a great deal of time either here or in Britain as "spoils of war" and who contributed their knowledge to rocket research in these countries. The members of the society realize that it will undoubtedly be quite a while before they will be allowed to engage in experimental work with rockets, but until that time comes they will do theoretical calculations so necessary in rocket design. Because they were the producers of the world's greatest rockets—which have not yet been exceeded in power or size (the famous V-2's) they are sure that they will be able to do some startling things. They are in correspondence with American and British scientists and are lending their knowledge and talents to the generally considered project of the Moon rocket. The society is quite optomistic, agreeing that the Moon rocket is only a few years away!

ATOMIC YARDSTICK

★ By JUNE LURIE ★

THE ELECTRON microscope is used constantly in probing into the nature of small invisible things ranging from viruses and bacteria to large molecules. To determine the degree of magnification of an electron microscope simply, is not an easy task. There is no simple way to tell, either, how large the objects you're observing beneath the instrument, are. That is, there wasn't a simple method until now.

It has been announced—and a photograph appeared in a national magazine which showed the yardstick—that a happy accident has supplied electron microscopists with the tool they needed for a long time.

By chance a batch of liquid carrying minute rubber latex particles was examined under the electron microscope along with some virus samples. The observer noticed that the little particles of rubber were spherical and *all of the same size.* He examined more of the gallon sample of liquid latex he had and found all the particles to be alike. Not only that, but they were a uniform one one-hundred thousandth of an inch in diameter. He had found the perfect measuring tool.

Along with each sample being examined under the scope, a few particles of rubber latex can be placed. These serve as natural measure comparisons. While only one gallon of the stuff exists, it is more than enough for microscopists for the next fifty years. You don't use much under an electron microscope!

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The CYBERNETIC BRAIN

By CHARLES RECOUR

It was a unique problem: Could an artificial leg possess a brain that would control the leg — and not the entire body?

"IT'S TOO bright," Larry Fenton muttered thickly. The first wave of consciousness washed over him. He spoke again, this time louder, and he was surprised at the mushiness of his own tones. "—t's too bright." Mercifully it dimmed and Larry saw the green-tinted ceiling overhead.

He was unable to move his head. When he tried, only his eyeballs moved. Even that limited motion told him where he was. Through the vague haze he could see the nurse, glistening and shining in starched white cap, bending over him.

"Feeling better now, Mr. Fenton," she said cheerfully. "You've had a rough time."

Larry nodded ever so slightly. He closed his eyes. He heard the nurse's voice gradually diminish as she walked away:

"That's it. Sleep some more and . . ." The words trailed off. Larry's awakened mind took stock of himself. Why the devil was he in a hospital? W' -t had happened? Why couldn't he move? He felt like shouting for a moment but the thought of the physical effort pained him. He lay quiescent. Time pa.sed.

Presently Larry could keep his eyes open. Now thinking wasn't such an effort. Cautiously he made some effort to move. There was no result. His body felt laden with lead and he realized that he must have been anesthetized for some time.

He luxuriated in the sense of coming to for what seemed quite a while but was in reality no more than ten minutes. Experimentally he moved his right arm. Gratefully he felt it respond to his command. And then his left arm. Soon he felt better.

Gingerly he slid both his hands down the length of his body from his chest on. He felt them pass over the convexity of his chest, then his flat flanks and then along his thighs. Suddenly his right hand stopped.

He felt a bulge. His finger-tips explored it. A hideous thought began forming in his mind. His han' slid over the bulge. Then it passed over empty space—over nothingness. A great sob welled up in his throat. The horrible realization came to him at last.

His right leg was gone!

He opened his mouth wide. The raucous, terrible, gibbering scream reverberated in the small hospita' room.

The nurse came dashing back into the room.

"Mr. Fenton! Mr. Fenton!" she shouted. "You musn't do that. Please be quiet!" She stared down at the screaming man and put her cool hand

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The surgeon worked deftly, attaching the "brain" to the nerve ends in the amputated leg . . .

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on his fevered forehead. Larry's sobs and shouts continued unabated.

Calmly Miss Jansen reached over to the night-table and brought out a hypodermic needle. She fitted the cartridge to it. A minute later Larry's anguished screaming stopped. Nurse Jansen put down the injection instrument. She stared down at the drugged man for a moment and her eyes were full of pity. She eyed the long lean figure, the firm masculine face, its day's growth of beard startling against the paleness of the skin. She shook her head. "What a shame," she whispered to herself. She walked softly out of the hospital room...

LARRY FENTON catapulted this time back into consciousness. One moment he was drugged—the next, fully alert. He shook his head, feeling the sweat running down into his eyes. He wiped his forehead with the edge of the bed-sheet. He didn't reach down toward his thigh again. Instead his mind raced like an engine, repeating the scene of horror—not that it seemed so horrible at the time.

Was it *that* important that he had to make the early morning class? How ironic! Shake it up and lose a leg, he thought bitterly. What a fool! He could almost feel his right foot pressing down on the accelerator. The sense of power and speed that accompanied such a simple action was thrilling. Thrilling? It was the act of a damned fool. He knew the pillar-supported railway bridge was not far up ahead.

From as little as he could recall, he vaguely remembered thinking about something—what was it?—and then he suddenly realized the wheel was turning to the left, the car was drifting to the left. With the automatic instincts of the good driver he made his correction—and then it happened. Out of the light dewy mist that covered the road and seemed to hover like a five-foot blanket, the danger loomed.

In the split-second before he lost consciousness, Larry saw the steel pillar. Its black ominousness impressed itself with desperate clarity on his mind. In that fraction of a second before awareness vanished and dissolved in blackness and shock, Larry's ears caught the shrill squeal of tortured sheet metal, the tinkling crash of broken glass. Then all vanished.

As Larry lay in the hospital bed, it took time for reason to assert itself, but it was to win out with him. After the first shock of realizing that he had lost a leg had passed, his native intelligence asserted itself. He could do one of two things, he told himself.

Be more of a fool, moan and groan and pity yourself; play this up for a great tragedy—it is that—but what will it get you? Thank God you've lost only a leg. Think how much worse it could have been. Be grateful you've got your eyes and hands and the rest of you! That was the attitude to take! There was no use reflecting on the past. The thing to do was to think of the future and what could be done. You can still study and work, Larry. This won't interrupte the doctorate you want.

Over this constructive chain of thought, another powerful thought was asserting itself. Larry, old man, the whispered thought said, when you get out of here, the first thing you're going to do is to see Dr. Theodore Schmidt—good old "Teddy Bear" will have something to say about this.

"Good morning, Mr. Fenton. Feeling a lot better, eh?"

Larry waked from his introspective analysis. He looked up at the swarthy little doctor trailed by Nurse Jansen. He grinned feebly.

"I'm Dr. Gladden," the surgeon said. "I'm handling your case. I'm

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sorry we had to do it, but your leg was so badly crushed that it was the only answer. You realize that."

Larry nodded: "I know Doctor," he said, "I was simply a damned fool. It's probably a miracle that I'm here alive. Anything else wrong with me?"

"I don't think so," Dr. Gladden said. "According to the x-rays, you're all right—except for the leg. Right, Miss Jansen?"

THE NURSE smiled: "Mr. Fenton certainly has improved. It wasn't so long ago that he was making quite a bit of noise. But now..." She seemed surprised at Larry's cheerfulness.

"I did holler quite a bit, didn't I?" Larry said with a wry grin.

Dr. Gladden said seriously. "You had every right to. After all, it's been a shock. I'm surprised that you're taking it as calmly as you are. And I'm glad."

"May I have a cigarette?" Larry asked. The nurse placed one between his lips and lighted it. Larry took a deep drag.

Dr. Gladden waved a paper he was carrying. "We would like to ask you the usual routine questions, age, name, business and so forth. Before we begin I might as well tell you the car was a total wreck according to the police report."

The routine questioning took just a short time and Larry's simple life-history was put on paper. Student doing graduate work in physics at the Technological Institute. Age twenty-seven. Unmarried. Expecting a doctorate in five months. Small private income.

When they had finished, Larry asked: "Tell me something doctor. How long will I be here?"

"It'll be at least a couple of months before the stump is healed sufficiently. And don't you worry about a thing. This hospital has one of the finest prosthetic departments in the country. We'll see that you get the best in an artificial leg. Dr. Gorham is noted for his work. It'll take another four to six months before you learn to use a prostesis as you would your own leg."

"Uh-uh," Larry demurred and shook his head. "No, Dr. Gladden; that isn't what I want. All I want to know is how long it'll take me to get up and around on crutches."

The doctor looked surprised: "Well," he said, "if the stump heals rapidly, it may be a matter of a month or so."

"Fine, Larry said. "You see, I have a friend who'll make me more than simply a prosthetic device—maybe you've heard of him—Dr. Theodore Schmidt."

"I recall the name," Gladden said. "He's got something to do with that new fad, cyber—cyber—"

"Cybernetics," interrupted Larry, "isn't a fad. It's a new science."

"I've never heard of it," the nurse said. "What has it got to do with prosthetic devices?"

"A lot more than you think," Larry answered. "It's going to be the answer to a lot of men's prayers."

Dr. Gladden said: "I don't want to break up what could be an interesting discussion, but you've got to get some more rest, Mr. Fenton. You can talk tomorrow. Here, take this." He produced a white packet of powder and a glass of water.

THE STUMP of the severed leg healed without complications and what was more important, Larry's mind attained the calmness and acceptance of fact that such an accident demanded. During his month's stay in the hospital Larry carried on a diligent correspondence with Dr. Theodore Schmidt. And the insatiable drive that fired him was evidenced by the miniature library he accumulated

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Practically all of the books had words like "cybernetics," "servomechanisms", and "communication theory" in them, plus numerous texts on miniature vacuum tubes and relays. The nurses and doctors kidded him good-humoredly about "building a robot and transplanting his brain." Larry laughed with them, but there was intense and serious purpose in everything he was doing.

Now he found himself aboard the train taking him to the laboratory of Dr. Schmidt. His crutches on which he had learned to rely were parked at his side. Larry put down the magazine he was reading and stared out the window as the train began to move. He ran his hand over the pinned-up trouser leg that covered the stump end. The initial bitterness had passed quickly. He had to live with his disability and he was going to make the best of it.

The magic word "cybernetics" seemed to pound through his mind with the rhythm of the wheel-clicks. You're a lucky man, he told himself, just to have the chance you think you're going to get. Maybe it won't be anything—but maybe it will.

Larry visualized the impromptu, enthusiastic lecture he had given on the subject of cybernetics shortly after he'd encountered the word. It was one of those coffee-and-cigarette sessions college students are so fond of, and Larry was explaining to his friends what the word meant:

"Cybernetics," he said, "that's Greek for 'steersman' and believe me it's a word you're going to hear a lot of in this last half of the Twentieth Century. Doc Wiener at M.I.T. and a bunch of other boys, physicists, physiologists, mathematicians and engineers thought it up. It covered the idea of control mechanisms, like thermostats, anti-aircraft directors, calculating machines and anything automatic. This bunch of technical men got together and began to think about some peculiar resemblances.

"If you stop and think about it, there is a surprising resemblance between certain automatic machines like telephone exchanges, and the human nervous system. Man has reached the point where it is now practicable to design an automatic machine for any conceivable operation.

"Not long ago one of the big magazines ran an article on how factories are becoming more and more automitized. Look at the baby in England which makes radio receivers, little two-tubers it's true, by just feeding raw materials in one end and collecting a finished radio at the other.

"But beyond the idea of making simply automatic machines which is so characteristic of western civilization, think of the technique of making machines to duplicate almost every human function. Hearing aids, for example using a microphone of great sensitivity, an amplifier and a speaker extend the power of the human ear and aid the nearly deaf.

"Or how about the 'reading machines'. These gadgets, still being worked on, use a photo-electric pick-up, an amplifier, a converter, and a loudspeaker. Scan printed matter, go over lines of type with a stylus carrying a cell, and the machine *reads aloud!*

"Cybernetics is the study of the relationships, the similarity, and the analogies existing between mechanisms and the human nervous system. It promises to deliver great aids for the handicapped, as well as to expose whole new secrets of what makes men and machines tick. It is a new science compounded of physics, physiology, neurology, communication engineering, power engineering—and mercy.

"In a way it makes men like gods, to have this tremendous power thrust into their hands. Some cyberneticists have said that it will be possible to

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create a machine capable of thinking! Within limits and on a certan scale this has already been done. A human brain appears to be very much like an automatic telephone exhange, except immensely more complicated. Nevertheless, it does resemble it. Jamming an exchange is comparable to overloading a human mind—insanity."

MUSING so, Larry remembered well the startled interest his impromptu lecture had created from the host of questions with which he was bombarded. He hadn't been able to keep abreast of all that was being done in the field until his recently "enforced leisure." Now he knew the subject was going hog-wild—and Dr. Theodore Schmidt was the man to see. Painstaking scientist, superb technician, humane man, that was Schmidt. Thank God, thought Larry, that I know him—it's a new lease on life.

When the train stopped Larry lurched his way on crutches self-consciously through the aisle to the door. Gingerly he lowered himself to the station platform, and with the hyper-sensitiveness of the disabled, disdained gruffly the proffered arm of the conductor.

He looked around the station platform taking a deep breath of the fresh spring air, Suddenly he felt a hand on his elbow.

"Mr. Fenton?—or is it Doctor Fenton?" Larry turned and found himself staring into a smiling face. His pulse pounded a little faster at the sight of the strikingly beautiful girl. In turning, his face almost brushed her flowing black hair and the scent of delicate cologne pleased him.

He grinned. "Not quite—just 'Mister' yet—but maybe later...Miss—uh—uh—"

"I'm Joanne Cambridge," the girl supplied, "Dr. Schmidt's secretary. He asked me to pick you up at the station. The car is over there."

Larry was brought back to reality when she said kindly but not patronizingly, "Here, let me take your bag. It'll be a bit easier. I was on those things once myself. I broke my leg on the girl's basketball team." Her musical laugh made Larry accept her aid without hesitation. Larry followed her clumpingly to the station wagon parked a few feet away.

When they got in the car Larry said: "Thanks, Miss Cambridge. I hate this awkwardness but you know how it is."

"Think nothing of it," she said, "and you might as well call me 'Joanne'. Dr. Schmidt isn't much on formality."

"Fine," Larry said. "I like that, Joanne. Evidently Dr. Schmidt hasn't changed much since I knew him. And make it 'Larry' too please."

"O.K. Larry," Joanne said. "Dr. Schmidt often spoke of you. Even before your accident."

"I'm ashamed of myself," Larry said, "that I waited so long to contact him—especially since he's done so much work in cybernetics which always did interest me."

"You'll be surprised at some of the things he's produced," the girl said, skillfully driving the car along the quiet streets. "And you'll certainly appreciate his work. Dr. Schmidt has said that vacuum tube design was your avocation."

"I've played with it quite a bit but working for the doctorate and then this—"—Larry gestured toward his leg—"didn't leave me too much time."

It was a twenty minute drive to the laboratory and Larry came to like the girl quickly. She was not only beautiful—she was intelligent and charming—and to himself Larry thought that here was a girl for whom he could make a real play—if he were his old self, if he were a whole man. The thought was bitter in his mind.

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JOANNE did the clerical and stenographical work for the laboratory, aiding Dr. Schmidt in many ways. Because of his world-renowned work, she had a wide acquaintance with foreign languages. Her interests and hobbies fascinated Larry and in the brief time he had known her he was already becoming too interested in her.

Take hold of yourself he mentally said; this girl has everything and she's probably hounded by the best. She hasn't time to take an interest in a man with one leg—damn it! Stop it! Stop belittling yourself. So you've got one leg. So what. If Schmidt can give you some help, you won't even miss that. Stop the despair and whining. Wake up Larry, you jerk!

He chuckled half aloud at his thoughts.

"Was it that good?" the girl asked, turning slightly to him.

Larry looked at her a long time. "It was," he said quietly, "it certainly was!"

The long, low research building soon appeared and the car pulled up before it.

"Go right in the office," Joanne said, "Dr. Schmidt's waiting for you. I'll take your bag to your room and join you later."

"Thanks a lot," Larry said.

Painstakingly, on the still unfamiliar crutches, he made his way to the lab office. He knocked and opened the door. As he entered, he felt right at home, for a booming voice greeted him.

"*Hereinkommen!*" the guttural Germanic tones of the refugee scientist thundered out. "Ach, Larry, it is good to see you!"

The vast bulk of Dr. Theodore Schmidt, the world's foremost authority on cybernetics, stepped up to him and Larry felt warmed by the twinkling friendly eyes of the man who was his ex-teacher. The greetings were fast and furious and Dr. Schmidt took almost no notice of the missing leg—he dismised any conversation with the curt, "Chust vait—ve'll fix it up schnell!" His accent varied with his excitement. Ordinarily he had but a trace.

Larry made himself comfortable and over the inevitable coffee and cigarettes they reminisced. But they didn't waste very much time.

After a half hour of pleasant conversation, Dr. Schmidt picked up the phone on his desk:

"Joanne," he said, "bring it in now." He looked at Larry, his eyes shining, "now you'll see what we've done while you've been in the hospital sending me all those letters."

A minute later Joanne entered the office. She carried a long wooden box which she set on the scientist's desk. She turned to Larry and smiled.

"Hi, again," she said. "This is your baby—and I think you'll be surprised."

Dr. Schmidt lifted an object from the box. Larry stared, astonished.

It was an artificial leg, so cleverly and so artfully designed that it could hardly be told from a real one. Dr. Schmidt handed it to Larry.

"Feel it," he said, beaming, "it's made of plastic and titanium. It doesn't weigh very much."

Larry hefted the incredibly real contraption. To the touch, it felt as if it were made of human flesh. Its lightness was due to its being made of titanium, a metal as strong as steel but much lighter. Its upper portion carried a web strap-and-belt arrangement for attaching to the thigh.

Larry peered into the hollow leg, Dr. Schmidt handed him a flashlight. There was a complex arrangement of levers and racks and Larry could see them move as he flexed the leg at the knee and at the foot.

"This is wonderful," he breathed staring at it admiringly.

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"Show him the brain, Doctor," Joanne interrupted, "*That* will really startle him!"

DR. SCHMIDT reached in the wooden box and brought out a metal chassis similar to a small radio. Mounted on it were several tubes, coils and transformers. It was not very impressive. He set it on his desk.

"Larry," he said, now grave, "if this will do what I think it will, it will be the greatest invention of the time. It is an auxiliary brain!"

Larry sat there, shocked. It was no dream. Dr. Schmidt had done the wonder of wonders in cybernetics. He was brought back to reality by the sound of the doctor's voice.

"—and we fit this little electronic brain and amplifier in the hollow of the leg, connect its output to certain servo-motors and relays within the leg. *Into the input of the brain we connect nerve-endings from your thigh!* The power supply comes from built-in batteries and electric capacitor-accumulators. In the bottom of the foot-portion of the leg is mounted a pressure sensitive device which will help control the leg—which will tell the brain and your body when you are dividing the weight between the real leg and the artificial one."

"Am I to understand," Larry asked incredulously, "that you're actually going to connect my nervous system to a mechanical amplifier?"

"Right!" Dr. Schmidt affirmed bruskly, "and we're going to start right now. The first thing you will have to do is let Dr. Clydestone operate on your stump."

"What will he do?" Larry asked.

"He'll bring out the desired nerve-endings from the end of the stump. He'll connect them through platinum wires to little cable connectors. I think he said about seven connections

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will be necessary. It won't be quite like your own leg, but it'll be as near perfection as we can make it!"

Larry was dazed. He had expected a lot of detail work to be done before anything like this was ready, but here, Dr. Schmidt had already designed every necessary mechanism for creating an artificial automatic, electro-mechanical, cybernetic leg. It was hardly believable.

The next hours passed with whirlwind rapidity. Under a local anaesthetic Larry watched Dr. Clydestone make the precise seven incisions in his leg-stump, watched him insert and make the connections of platinum-iridium wire. And when the operation was done, Larry saw that he had seven nerve-endings protruding from his flesh, terminating, in ordinary electrical connections!

When the operation had been completed, the while Dr. Schmidt observed it, Clydestone said:

"You'll have to nurse this along for two or three weeks until the stump is once again healed and desensitized to ordinary pressures. Then we can see how the leg will react."

Wan and drawn by the emotional impact of the ordeal of the last two months, Larry nodded weakly. "It can't heal too fast for me. If I wasn't so sure that this was the best thing, I'd have settled for an ordinary prosthesis."

Dr. Schmidt bristled. "*I* wouldn't have allowed it," he said flatly. "I vant you to valk around, not *hobble* mit only vun good leg!"

Larry slept heartily for ten hours and when he came to he felt much better. The fact that Joanne was there when he awakened had a good deal to do with his feeling of well-being, he admitted to himself.

With the hope provided by the possibilities of the cybernetic leg, he felt like a new man. This coupled with the extensive interest he was taking in Dr. Schmidt's secretary, made the next weeks go by pleasantly and rapidly. In addition he felt a good deal of satisfaction when he was called upon for technical advice.

HE STUDIED the leg, its nature and operation and construction thoroughly. Only then did he appreciate what a marvel of science and engineering it was. Dr. Schmidt's genius enjoined with the new concepts of communication engineering and cybernetics, had produced a technical mechanical and electrical marvel. The leg was so cleverly constructed that it could move with almost all the motions of a real one.

But it was not the leg itself which was the real impressive agent; rather it was the electronic brain and the servo-mechanisms servicing it. Servo-mechanisms were simply electric or hydraulic motors whose motion was precisely controlled from a distance by electronic means.

The leg was to function, in a way, as a servo-mechanism operated by Larry's brain, through the mediation of the electronic brain in the leg. It might be said that the artificial leg was a robot. Larry laughed at the thought. He was going to be actually made up of part-man, part-robot when the leg was finally fitted to him. But it was better by far than using the crude prosthetic devices ordinarily employed.

And what this could mean to all of the disabled, if it worked on him! Should the machine prove to be sound, it was Dr. Schmidt's intention to turn it over at once to large manufacturers where it could be supplied in various forms to any amputees—legs, arms, hands. It would be an engineering miracle.

Larry knew he was in love with Joanne. That fact finally came through clearly but he forced him-

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self to avoid speaking of it. He would not offer himself, an incomplete man, to her—he could not. What would she be interested in him for, if it was not purely sympathy? He didn't want that. And so, while he saw a great deal of her and while they had wonderfully pleasant times together, Larry avoided what was uppermost in his mind. How many times did he want to take her in his arms and crush her to him! And didn't. How many times did he have the opportunity and apparently the invitation to tell her that he loved her! And yet he didn't!

Finally the time came when Clydestone pronounced the stump sufficiently healed for the leg to be attached.

"Before we go ahead and do it," he said as they were assembled once more in Dr. Schmidt's office, "I want to check your 'nervous circuits'."

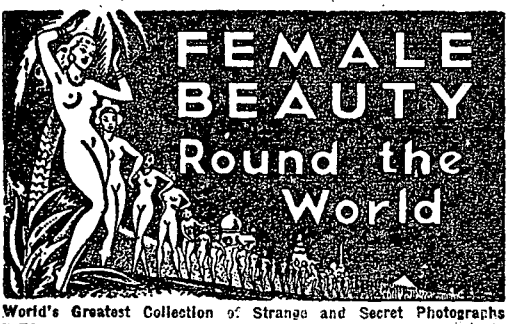
"Go ahead," Larry grinned. "Check me for continuity."

Clydestone laughed and Dr. Schmidt smiled. The surgeon applied small electrical impulses to the platinum-iridium tipped nerve endings and chortled satisfactorily as Larry registered slight pain, tickling, shock and other emotions stimulated by the electric currents.

The leg, its interior a maze of electrical and mechanical complexities, was finally brought out. Larry had spent so much time studying both it and its wiring diagrams that he felt he knew it better than he did his own body.

The seven connections protruding from Larry's stump were joined to their appropriate counterparts in the cybernetic leg. The artificial limb was strapped firmly to Larry's thigh and adjusted until it felt comfortable.

"How does it feel?" Dr. Schmidt asked.



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"So far, so good," Larry replied, sweat of nervous tension standing out on his forehead. "I'm ready," he continued, a nervous falsetto-note in his voice. "Give it the juice!"

Dr. Schmidt pressed the button on the upper thigh-covering.

"Turn it on," Larry said anxiously.

"It is on." Schmidt answered.

"I don't feel anything," Larry said, his voice now low and tense.

"My God!" Joanne breathed, "Look!"

Before the startled eyes of the four of them, the mechanical foot was moving, bending ever so slightly, just as if Larry were walking!

IT TOOK Larry just three days to get used to the fact that to all intents and purposes, the electro-mechanical marvel which he was wearing was as good as his left leg. As he became accustomed to it, it obeyed his every impulse. He could walk, run, kick, bounce, dance and move on it, as if it was made of flesh and blood. With every step he took his confidence multiplied and soon he regarded the leg with the same unconscious reflection he would have accorded his real one.

Under Dr. Schmidt's urging, or rather at his request, Larry decided to remain at the lab for at least another month while the details of design for a mass-produced leg were worked out. His own technical knowledge was valuable to Schmidt and his co-workers. And of course it was expected that with continued research, the leg could be improved in many minor respects. Larry with his interest in tube design, was determined to make the amplifier-brain section of the machine even smaller through the use of sub-miniature tubes. Dr. Schmidt heartily approved of the idea.

With his confidence in himself restored Larry began to pay increasing attention to Joanne. They were soon going everywhere together and Larry had resumed dancing—expertly—a thing he wouldn't have believed two months ago. Larry was so immersed in work and play that he payed little conscious attention to a number of peculiar things.

One night he was at a dance with Joanne. They were dancing close together blissfully unconscious of anything but the music and themselves, when suddenly, in the midst of a step, Larry's artificial leg flung itself out at a crazy angle, completely independent of the rhythm of the music.

"Larry! What's the matter?" Joanne cried, alarmed as she sought to steady him.

Embarrassed and blushing, Larry recovered himself. "It's nothing," he said in confusion as he led her from the floor, "I must have tripped or lost control or something." He didn't speak further and Joanne didn't press the matter. But Larry wasn't so sure—the leg seemed to have moved of itself. Oh, he told himself, it was probably just a muscular contraction. Forget about it. And forget about it he did.

The second incident which disturbed him and which he mentioned jokingly to Joanne occurred when he was shopping in the nearby town.

He was just getting off a crowded bus along with several others. At the same time a burly mechanic was getting on. As he stepped down, the mechanic accidentally jostled him—a strong shove of the shoulder. Ordinarily Larry wouldn't even have noticed the matter. Then for just a brief moment a flaring intolerable rage took hold of him. His artificial leg shot out and soundly kicked the shin of the mechanic. The man howled with pain, but the bus was away and Larry off it before more could be made of the matter. As he stood watching the retreating bus,

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Larry scratched his head. Why had he done that? The man hadn't meant to shove him. Why should he become so angry? He shrugged and forgot about it, laughing with Joanne over it later.

About the third week after he had worn the leg, Joanne noticed a peculiar irritability about Larry. Ordinarily the calmest and most-good-natured of fellows, he started to develope a strange surliness completely out of character with his nature.

The girl mentioned it to him casually. "Don't be silly," Larry replied testily. "It's your imagination. I'm just a little tired anyway." A bit hurt the girl didn't bring it up again though she noticed more and more this odd aggressiveness.

SHE MENTIONED it to Dr. Schimdt. The scientist laughed. "Overwork," he said. "Tell him to relax. Maybe you think the cybernetic amplifier brain has something to do with it?" He started to roar at his own joke.

"There is something wrong with Larry, Doctor," Joanne said seriously, "and I wouldn't be surprised if that leg had something to do with it."

"If it'll make you happy. I'll check into it," Schmidt said. "Now smile, your young man's all right."

Under the guise of research activity the cybernetic leg was thoroughly overhauled and checked by the technicians. Nothing was found to be the matter with it. It was in perfect mechanical and electrical condition. When Dr. Schmidt intimated that Larry might not be feeling too well, the young scientist admitted that he had been having a case of nerves but that it would pass quickly. "Just nervous reaction," he shrugged away the worry.

But deep down Larry knew there was something wrong. He was loathe

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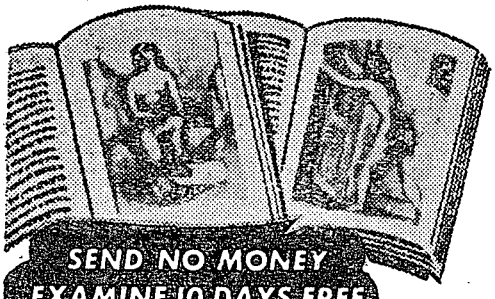

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to attribute it to the cybernetic leg, but somehow he felt that a strangely malignant relationship was somehow developing. It was assinine, he told himself, but it seemed to exist. Stop thinking of the leg as an identity—it's a part of you. Don't be a fool.

A growing coolness developed between him and Joanne though he continued to date her.

One warm summer night after a long drive in the country, he took Joanne home fairly early. As they stopped before the house and he prepared to get out and open the door for her, he said:

"I'll drop you now, Joanne. I want to go down to the lab and do a little work. I don't feel like sleeping tonight. It's too early."

You big lug, Joanne said bitterly to herself. On a night like this you don't feel like sleeping and you want to go down to the lab and work. Oh why did you have to come into my life? Why did I have to fall in love with you?

Aloud, she said: "I don't feel like going in either. Take me down to the office with you. I've got some paperwork to get out anyhow. Do you mind?"

"O.K." Larry answered shortly, "Come on along if you like." He put the car in gear and gave it the gun.

Come on along if you like... What's the matter with him? Oh if I only knew what was wrong. She glanced down at the right leg—that strange thing, she thought; was it really possible...

They entered the lab and Joanne went into the office while Larry went on to the labs. Neither spoke. Joanne watched Larry's lean frame vanish down the corridor, his right leg as natural and as real as his left.

She went to her desk and started working on some papers which required proofreading before being submitted to the printer. Time passed swiftly.

She lit a cigarette and concentrated but soon she found her attention wandering. She yawned once or twice and began to feel drowsy. Her head drooped and soon was in a half-sleep.

Suddenly Joanne awakened with a start. She looked at the clock. Twelve-thirty already? She leaned back and stretched langurously. There was a slight sound behind her. She turned.

Larry was standing in the doorway, watching her.

"Through already?" she said pleasantly and turned back to the papers on the desk. Then abruptly she turned to look back at him. And icy fingers of fear began to claw at her spine.

LARRY was standing in the doorway watching her. In his right hand was a heavy metal rod such as is used on laboratory ringstands. He was gently brushing it against the side of his leg—*his right leg.* And the foot of that right leg was slowly and deliberately tapping itself against the floor—but soundlessly.

It wasn't that sight that bothered her. Instead she was staring into Larry's face. There was a queer vacuous smile on his face, a complete negation of personality such as she had never seen before. It was as if his mind was a thousand miles away, as if he didn't really see her, but was looking through or beyond her.

"Larry?" she gulped, "Larry..." she repeated nervously, "what—"

"Larry!" she screamed, suddenly interrupting herself. "No—no—what's wrong? Stay back. Please don't come nearer. Larry! Stop! Please. Darling, please!"

Her voice shrilled into an hysterical note. Larry started to walk slowly toward her, taking infinitely small, deliberate steps. Joanne glanced wildly around. There was no where to run to.

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Larry continued to advance on her. Slowly he brought up the metal rod and poised it before him ready to strike. There was no expression on his face but mocking emptiness.

Desperately Joanne looked around for a weapon. She realized that the wild light in his eyes meant murder, sheer bloody murder.

Larry was almost on her. In a desperate convulsive movement, Joanne's hands fastened on her light stenographer's chair. It was easy to wield—all hollow tubing and sheet metal. She brought it up horizontally and in a body-breaking sweep brought it around her in a hip-level swing. It caught Larry squarely on his right leg just as he brought down the bar. The metal rod swept over Joanne as she flung herself forward and buried itself in a smashing blow on the typewriter.

At the same time the chair crumpled Larry's artificial leg and he went down in an unbalanced heap, Joanne beneath him. The force of his effort to balance himself, coupled with the powerful blow from the chair, broke the straps on the cybernetic leg and it slid from his body, from his trouser leg, and flew across the room with a slithering sound.

Joanne, panic-stricken and terrified, felt the nerveless bulk of Larry crush down on her. Driven by fear and terror she wriggled free. Her eye caught one glimpse of the leg lying in the corner. She could not swear to it, but for one tormented instant, it seemed to her anguished mind that it moved—ever so slightly—but it moved.

She ran to the telephone and screamed into the mouthpiece— "Operator—operator!—please get me Dr. Schmidt. Dr. Schmidt—Please! I—I..." The phone dropped from her nerveless fingers. And mercifully she fainted—the shock was too great...

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LARRY'S glazed eyes opened and he saw Joanne's face above his, her arms cradling him.

"Darling!" she cried, "are you better?"

"Wh-what happened?" Larry asked weakly. He saw the room filled with the cheery bulk of Dr. Schmidt and Clydestone. They were bent over the desk examining Larry's cybernetic leg.

Joanne told him the whole story of what had happened.

"It's incredible, Joanne," he said. "I can't believe that I tried to harm you—I can't believe it."

"It wasn't you Larry," Joanne said. "It couldn't have been you. It was that leg. Don't you notice the difference now?"

"I don't know—really," Larry replied. "I do feel better—I think." He hesitated. "Could it have been the leg, Dr. Schmidt?"

The scientist shrugged. "I don't know," he said heavily. "We'll have to check it over thoroughly. The leg must have had something to do with your—" he paused, embarrassed—"with your 'temporary madness', but I don't know what. Joanne said you fainted the minute the leg was struck. Well, we'll soon find out."

Dr. Clydestone brought electrical apparatus into the office. "Larry," he said as he set it up, "did you notice any irritation in the leg itself?"

"No," Larry replied, "I didn't. Frankly, that leg seemed a living part of me."

"May I interrupt a moment?" Joanne asked, her face resuming some of its former color.

"Go ahead," Dr. Schmidt said.

"Well, you've spoken of the leg as almost a living thing. You and Larry and Dr. Clydestone said that the mechanical and electrical parts of the leg were controlled by Larry's brain through a subsidiary. You called it the cybernetic brain, the amplifier and the connections to Larry's mind. Could that electronic brain have developed an independent life of its own?"

Dr. Schmidt looked at Dr. Clydestone. Glances of amazement appeared on their faces. Then they both started to laugh.

"It's no joke!" Joanne said vigorously. "I don't see anything to laugh at."

"You give me too much credit," the scientist said. "No, I don't think the electronic brain possessed an intelligence of its own. Something was wrong but not that. It's impossible. We can make cybernetics do a lot of things but we can't make duplicate brains—yet."

"Oh-oh," interrupted Clydestone. "I think we've got the trouble here. It looks like the feedback voltage was set too high-aha!—that's it. Look here."

Both Larry and Dr. Schmidt watched as he applied the prods of a sensitive vacuum-tube voltmeter to the broken leads leading from the socket of the artificial leg. The voltage read in the neighborhood of about a tenth of a volt.

"That's it!" boomed Dr. Schmidt. "It should be around ten millivolts. The feedback to Larry's nervous system was to much. That accounts for the irritability you noticed, Joanne. It probably built up to even a higher value tonight. That's what caused the trouble."

LARRY breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank God," he said, "I thought I was losing my mind. And I thought I might not be able to wear the thing. That I couldn't stand—not after it's been such a part of me."

"Well, you won't have anything more to worry about. We'll readjust the output controls and we'll put

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fuses in each lead. Then there'll be no chance for an irritating feedback voltage to develope. How does that suit you?" It was apparent that Dr. Schmidt was pleased that the problem was so easily solved.

"Next time we'll know better," Dr. Clydestone added. "We should have realized that feedback voltages to the human nervous system are nothing to play with—without plenty of protection."

There were profuse apologies and expressions of gratitude all around. It was just one more dangerous scientific experiment. Playing with the human nervous system—electrically—has always been dangerous. In this case it was even worse, because the element of danger wasn't even realized. Musing so Dr. Schmidt left the laboratory with Dr. Clydestone.

With the leg repaired and once more attached to Larry's person, Joanne and Larry left the laboratory and entered the car. Before Larry started the motor, Joanne snuggled close to him. His right arm tightened around her.

"Ah," she breathed, "that's more like you." She smiled impishly up at him. It was impossible to believe that a few short hours ago he had been trying to kill her.

She looked again at his right leg. Distaste was written on her face.

Suddenly she sat up erect.

"Larry," she said in low tones.

"What, honey?" he asked starting the engine.

"Could I have been right? Was the leg alive?"

Larry laughed: He squeezed her close to him. "I know how terrible it was for you honey, but don't even think about it. I assure you—it wasn't alive."

Joanne made a face of disgust. "Ugh," she said emphatically, "it's

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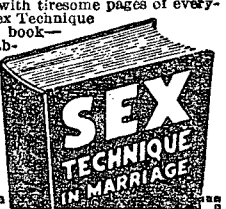

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hard to get out of my mind."

"Don't think about it," Larry advised tenderly, "forget all about such things as cybernetic brains—think about me."

"I will," Joanne promised softly, "I will..."

THE END

"RADIO" STANDARD

★ By A. T. Kedzie ★

IN WASHINGTON, not far from the National Bureau of Standards, is the world's most boring radio—not counting the soap operas. Station WWV is maintained by the United States Bureau of Standards and runs twenty-four hours a day. It's programs never carry any announcements, there are no comedians on it, it broadcasts no news or music—its entertainment value is straight zero! Yet this station, of which very few people have heard is extremely important to us. It is a *standard* by which all other radio stations are measured.

In order to prevent confusion, the radio stations must maintain very accurate operating frequencies. This can only be done if there is a suitable yardstick, another accurate radio station. And that's where WWV comes in. All day long it broadcasts steady signals on a wide variety of frequencies. These signals can be heard usually in the form of clicks or musical tones that go on monotonously perpetually. The reason is of course that engineers and scientists, wanting an accurate frequency or a precise time interval, have only to tune in WWV and they'll know that when they're picking up twenty megacycles, it's *just* that neither more nor less.

WWV is the equivalent of the standard meter, or the standard kilogram preserved in Washington. Only it deals with intangible radio waves and elusive increments of time. Without this service scientific accuracy would be impossible.

DEEP GOLD

★ By W. R. Chase ★

THE LUST for gold seems to compel men to dig deeper than they do for anything else. In South Africa, miners have gone over 11,000 feet down, approximately two miles. Although South Africa's mines are the deepest on earth, India has some nearly as deep. It seems that the farther down the miners dig, the warmer they find it. In some mines the air has to be cooled before the workers can descend.

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MOON SPLASHES!

★ By NED CROWE ★

WELL IT SEEMS at last as if astronomers and scientists have settled to their satisfaction what caused the craters on the Moon. A recent discussion analyzed the matter, surveyed all possible data and went into detail on earthly craters—the net result—the craters on the Moon were caused by the bombardment of meteors. That's *it!*

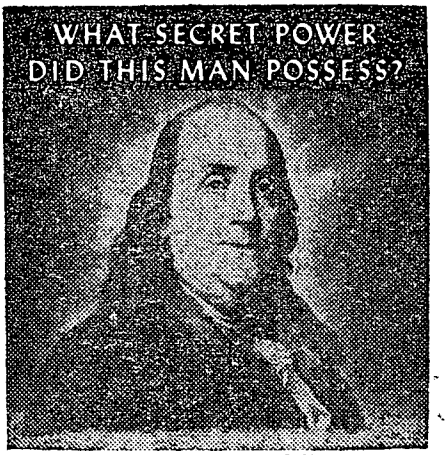
What helped bring in this verdict, in fact, what probably served as the settling inspiration, was an exhaustive study of man-made craters—namely bombs, and shells. The type of crater on the Moon is an exact duplicate, on an enormously larger scale of course, as that made by the explosion of a bomb or a shell on earth.

Larger explosions, such as those of ammunition dumps, ammunition factories as the like make this fact even stronger. The scientists point out the explosion which occurred in the Bavarian town of Oppau back in nineteen twenty-two. An ammonium nitrate plant exploded—some sixty thousand tons of the stuff which is as powerful as TNT—and created a hole in the ground ninety feet deep and four hundred feet in diameter as well as leveled the town! This fantastic and stupendous explosion produced a crater exactly like that found on the moon except for size.

An examination of the bombs dropped in Japan, Europe and Great Britain discloses the startling similarities of holes made by ten pound bombs, thousand pound bombs and twenty thousand pound bombs. The depth of the holes, in proportion to their diameters, the amount of matter piled up around them, the nature of the center peak—all these things show how the Moon craters were made.

Calculations showing the amount of energy and the size of the meteors agree fully. Science apparently has resolved the puzzle once and for all. To those who wonder why the Earth is not similarly afflicted, we need only point out the blanket of air which surrounds us, and also the fact, the Moon, never having had air, had been exposed to this process for hundreds of millions of years. We are seeing a museum piece so to speak, of what the earth's surface must have looked like when struck by the larger meteors which penetrated our gaseous atmosphere. Here, however we have and had, erosion. The net result is that we have only a few meteor craters in Arizona, Siberia and elsewhere. But we have them!

And astronomers are betting that when the first rockets get to the Moon they'll see that the other side has the identical pock-marks!



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★ By Sandy Miller ★

THEY SAY modern industry and civilization runs on wheels—that should be modified—it runs on a thin film of oil or grease. In back of all the complicated machines that we use everyday in our life ranging from automobiles to electric motors, exists that thin little film of **oil.** Without it the gears would quickly grind to a stop. One of the most romantic pictures is that of the steam engine greaser standing by the huge locomotive wheels with a long-necked oil can in his hand.

But alas, like all things, the hand oiler is on the way out. Up until the last ten or fifteen years it has been the practice in industry and elsewhere to grease oil machines which require it, by hand, periodically, shutting down the machine and inspecting the bearings to be oiled. What a waste of time and effort. The system is now passe' and many industrialists are looking around for the right robot to do the job, a robot which won't forget or which won't add too much or too little oil.

They've got their answer. Wherever machines should run continuously it is desirable that they be lubricated automatically. All that an automatic system consists of is a grease or oil reservoir, a pump, a measuring device, copper tubes to the points of lubrication and a push-button.

Such a centralized system of lubrication, while expensive to install, guarantees against frozen bearings or lubrication failures. The machines may be lubricated without shutting them down. Time and money are saved, and waste is eliminated. This centralized system of oiling is now being put everywhere. Rolls-Royce, the fine car manufacturer has such a system on his famous cars. You press a lever and bingo!—your car is greased from stem to stern! Why such a system is not used on American cars is not too hard to understand. It would eliminate a lot of car repairs as well as all grease jobs. We'll bet there are many millions of people who would pay the extra money it takes to put in such a system rather than buy all the junky accessories that seem to go along with automobiles.

Little things like this centralized lubricating are among the miracles which go to make up a robotized world. Ours is well on the way. Incidentally automatic controls can be built into the robot grease monkeys and can tell it when and how to grease the job. Thus the human function is simply to fill the lubricant reservoir. Is there nothing left for us to do? Soon we won't even have to eat. Maybe the age of food pills will come along and we can stagnate in peace. . . .

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READER'S PAGE

By THE READERS

HOLD THE BATTING AVERAGE

Sirs:

At last *Fantastic Adventures* has risen from its temporary batting slump and is once again hitting over three-hundred. There is only one point at which FA is prone to strike out, namely, the Reader's Page. Four issues have gone by from which the RP has been absent. Hope that this will not happen again. Just about the best part (to me) of reading a stf magazine is sitting down afterward and writing a letter of praise—or condemnation—to the editor of said mag. There's no use in doing it if there's no page for the readers.

Before I begin lauding the stories, let me say first that not one of them actually belonged in FA. They should have been used in *Amazing Stories*, for they were science fiction, and FA is supposed to be a fantasy magazine. Or has the policy been changed?

Now for a look at the August issue.

Not one story was bad. The best, I thought, was "Sons of the Prophet". I have thought for quite a while that what AS & FA need most is new authors—or authors that are selling other markets as well. Your regular writers are fine, but of them, I think that only Rog Phillips can keep up the pace.

With that observation out of the way I'll get back to the stories. "Seeds of Empire" placed second. And the rest followed: "Demonstration Flight", "The Tangential Semanticist", "The Man Who Laughed At Time", and "The Wee Men of Weehen". What was more astonishing, four out of seven stories were as original as stories can be these days. To wit: TMWLAT, TS, SOTP, and DF. I guessed the plot of the others before I was half through, but the above mentioned tricked me neatly. Continue to make FA as good as this!

Kohn had a fairly good cover; for once it looked like the FA of a year ago. Remember the cover you had for "The Man From Yesterday"? Walter Hinton, wasn't it? Give him a rest from *Mammoth Western*, and put him to work illustrating your next novel. Your interior illustrations are as good as can be expected, what with bad reproduction and bad drawings. You used to have Finlay, didn't you?...

To return to the August issue. The only hacky story was "The Wee Men of Weehen". The discs again! The only good story built around those infernal contraptions appeared a few months back, in either AS or FA, by Berkeley Livingston under the title, "Everything But the Sink". Incident-

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ally, when do we get another Livingston story in FA?

Alexander Blade is one of your top writers, but aren't you using him a bit too much recently? He's had four in the last five issues of FA and three of the last five in AS. This month's story began as if destined for the top place in the rating, but evidently he became hurried.

There has been some comment on Lee Francis' novel, "The Man From Yesterday". I'd like to make my own observation. I think it would be possible to dismiss the last line as of little consequence, and thereby bring on a sequel. So how about it, Ed? Can you do it?

I don't mind Shaver's cave stories too much, as long as he doesn't yell about their being true. One Shaver story I really did like was the *Red Dwarf*. I almost hate to ask for more Shaver, but...

Where is David V. Reed these days? And more important, what about Lawrence Chandler? There could easily be a sequel to "Forgotten Worlds".

Maybe this letter sounds a little bit disjointed in spots, but I'm trying to give you all the viewpoints and ideas of this particular fan. So I hope you'll bear with me.

I'd like to see Edgar Rice Burroughs in your magazine again. He used to write some top novels for you. But if you can't get him, we might be satisfied by a poor imitation in the form of "Tharn". Either the author's ability to write has fallen off since he penned the great "Warrior of the Dawn", or he wrote the sequel in haste, without a hint of plot. Methinks he had better stop trying to imitate Burroughs so much! By the way, did you ever notice that Burroughs hardly ever uses the word, *begin* but always *commence?*

Which just about winds up this long epistle. I'll be watching for the next issue of FA, so...

W. Paul Ganley

119 Ward Rd.

North Tonawanda, N.Y.

As you will have noted by now, Paul, the Reader's Page is back. So we'll bet that makes you happy. (It does us too!) Now to try and answer a few of your questions. As to FA running stf instead of fantasy, we've found that most of the readers prefer stf to fantasy, therefore we're trying to please the majority by giving the best stf stories we can. Of course, you'll be getting the best in fantasy too... We'll raise our editorial eyebrows at your observation that the interior illustrations in FA are bad. We think we've got some of the best artists in the field—and what's more important, most of the readers think so too. Just what do you find wrong with the illustrations?

You ask about author David V. Reed. We're glad to announce that finally—after much too long a silence—Dave has come through with a really great novel. You'll

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be hearing more about it soon, so just keep watching these pages!

As to a sequel for TMFY, we're in hearty agreement with you—but the rest is up to author Lee Francis. How about it, Lee?

We understand that Edgar Rice Burroughs has been in poor health for some time, and that his writing has been curtailed as a result. But we hope he'll be well enough soon to continue his work .....Ed.

REALISM IN SCIENCE-FANTASY

Sirs:

I'd like to make a somewhat belated mention of a story that appeared in the April issue of FA. I'm speaking of "Blue Bottle Fly" by Geoff St. Reynard. I thought it was quite realistic. I think that most people wonder at times if they are really what they think they are—as the author so ably portrayed in his story. For realism I think this yarn will be hard to beat.

This is also my first letter, and I hope you will publish it. I'm becoming more and more a fan of FA and AS every day, and if you ask me to say which of your authors I like best I would find it difficult to answer. So far they're all tops!

Harold Ritzer
11563 3-4 Riverside Dr.
North Hollywood, Cal.

We're glad to welcome you into the fold, Harold. And many thanks for the praise you give FA. Write again soon.....Ed.

WATCH THOSE COVERS.

Sirs:

May a fellow fan get a word in edgewise? I'd like to make a comment or two on the artwork in FA.

First of all, the covers. I've noticed many times that when an interplanetary scene is shown, and a girl included in it, invariably she is floating around in the void clad in nothing but her beauty. Now, I ask you, is that reasonable? The men are always shown in space suits etc. but the gals always as shining lights with equally shining bodies. I wonder just how long the gal's beauty would last in the utter cold vacuum of space? Methinks she would be a mess to behold!

It follows thus; that I would like to see a little more logic used in depicting scenes like this. Sure we like to look at pretty females, but just remember that in space they wouldn't look so pretty without protecting suits!

As to the interiors, they are more accurate, but rest assured that when a technical error is made, I'm going to call you on it. But I suppose your artists will do what they want anyway.

But rest assured that FA is still one of my favorites and that I would never think of missing an issue.

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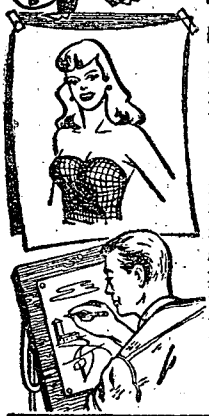

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LeRoy, N.Y.

We have to admit you've got a big point there, Glen, but as you say, the artists just naturally like to present a gal in all her charming femininity. And come to think of it, that isn't so bad from the standpoint of eye-appeal, now is it? But we'll tell our artists and see what they have to say ..... Ed

NOT ENOUGH TO READ

Sirs:

I have no hopes that this letter will be published in the Reader's section, but I'll write it anyway.

Firstly, let me say that I've been reading FA and AS for nigh onto 2000 years. Seriously, though, I have been, and shall continue to be, an avid, yea, even voracious reader of same.

I have, however, one gripe to air. There is insufficient reading matter to keep me contented. Perhaps I read too swiftly. (An average of 2 hours for an issue from cover to cover—not excluding the advertisements.)

This cannot be helped though, as once I start an issue, I am unable to put it aside until I finish it.

Perhaps you have some worthy suggestion to alleviate my suffering...

Before I close let me tell my two favorites to keep the stories coming. I'm speaking to Chester S. Geier and Rog Phillips. I can't get enough of these two to writers to satisfy me.

J. Robert Hubmann
439 Jones St. Apt. 210
San Francisco, Cal.

You've really got a difficult problem there, Bob. We'd say that you read just a little faster than the average reader. When we get FA ready for the presses it takes considerably longer than 2 hours for us to give it a thorough proofing—we wish we could do it that fast!

Maybe some of our readers have a solution to your problem—how about it gang! .....Ed

CHAMPAGNE CORK

★ By LESLIE PHELPS

ONE OF THE many problems concerning the designers of the high speed jet aircraft of the present time, is the little matter of permitting the pilot to jump out of the ship if anything goes wrong. It hasn't been an easy thing to solve. When rocket planes or semi-projectiles piloted by

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men become the war transport of the future, the troubles will be multiplied many times. Although it's bad enough now.

During the latter part of the Second World War, the Germans were using jet aircraft with a speed of better than six hundred miles per hour. They were also using rocket interceptors with speeds higher than this. Because they expected the craft to have a high casualty rate and because the rockets couldn't hold enough fuel for landing after performing their mission of intercepting the bombers, some provision had to be made for the experienced pilot to be parachuted earthward.

At six hundred or more per hour it is fantastic to hope that the pilot can step into the slip stream and be ejected satisfactorily. It is too much to expect him to buck such a wind without being thrown into some portion of the falling plane or without getting his head torn off by the violence of the wind. The Germans used a cockpit which was ejected by the explosion of a blank shell at the touch of a button. Thus the pilot was hurled away from the falling plane in a cocoon of metal and plastic, protected from the wind and thrown clear of any possible chance of collision. Similar provisions have been made for almost all aircraft today—that is of the high speed variety.

Attached to the ejected cocoon is a parachute automatically opened at the proper time. In effect the pilot is hurled out in a miniature self-contained life-boat of his own.

Measures such as these have an interesting bearing on future rocket problems. Undoubtedly safety provisions will have to be made along these lines. It has even been suggested for conventional piloted aircraft, that the entire passenger cabin be attached to a huge parachute capable of supporting it. Ejection and release too were to be accomplished automatically. Perhaps that system will be employed eventually because it is clearly impractical to equip each passenger with a parachute much less to expect him to wear it at all times during flight.

The designers of supersonic planes have even more disturbing problems. As far as the pilot protection goes, identical methods will have to be used. At such speeds, if anything goes wrong, it can hardly be expected that any creature of flesh and blood can react quickly enough to protect himself. He must rely on automatic mechanism.

What the interplanetary passenger or pilot of a rocket ship can expect is not pleasant to contemplate. We can conceive of the equivalent of ships' lifeboats, but it will be some time before they can be scaled down to equal effectiveness. It won't be nice being marooned between here and the Moon! Yet like all problems, safety will be somehow solved.

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★ By Pete Bogg ★

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One of the earliest quantitative principles discovered in physics is Hooke's Law. Everyone who ever went through high school remembers this law as an extremely simple one which says that the deflection or distortion in a spring is proportional to the applied force. If ten pounds stretches a spring five inches, twenty pounds will stretch it twice as far or ten inches. And this basic law of science is applied to all springs whether they're in our car or our toaster.

But a lot of modern mechanical devices ranging from that selfsame car to that toaster, require spring actions which do not obey Hooke's law; that is, we sometimes have to build machines in which we want the springs to behave differently. Maybe we want them to stretch far with a little force and then decrease their stretch with more force. In other words we would like to have springs which do not obey Hooke's Law. They would come in handy for many things.

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